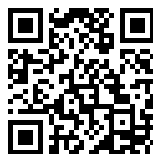

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British Regiments in War and Peace

THE RIFLE BRIGADE



WALTER WOOD

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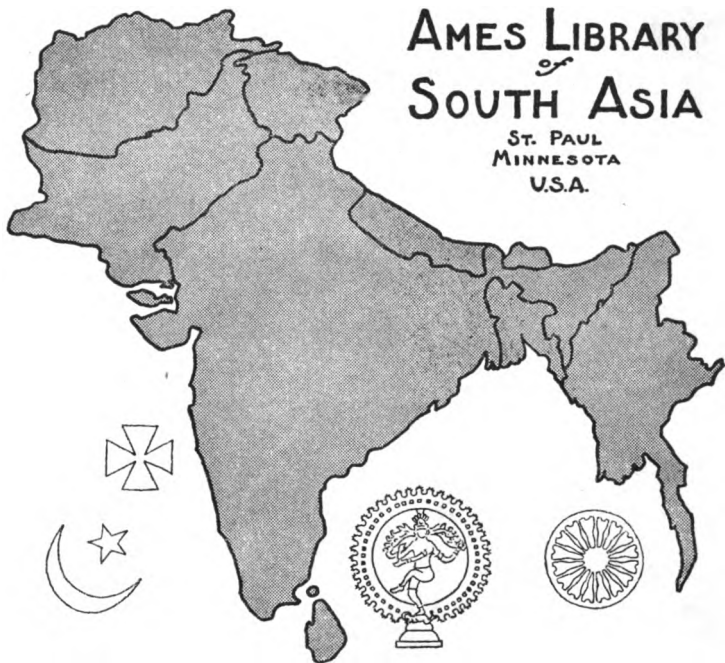


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THE RIFLE BRIGADE

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THE
RIFLE BRIGADE:

BY

WALTER WOOD.

AUTHOR OF 'FAMOUS BRITISH WARSHIPS,' ETC.

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TO
THE OFFICERS
NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS
AND MEN
OF
THE RIFLE BRIGADE
(THE PRINCE CONSORT'S OWN)

INTRODUCTION

IN these pages there is a departure from the customary plan of military history making. Records there are in plenty, valuable but dry details of a regiment's life from its birth up to a certain period. These are mostly contained in a series compiled by the late Richard Cannon, Principal Clerk in the Adjutant-General's Department of the War Office, and prepared and published by authority. The first volume was issued in 1837, and the last in 1851; but the whole Army was not dealt with, several regiments being still untouched when the issue of the records was discontinued. In all Cannon prepared some sixty volumes; and of his productions eighteen relating to the cavalry, and forty to the infantry, are still regularly advertised in the *Army List* amongst "Military

Books, published by Authority." But these "Historical Records of the British Army" do not include either the King's Royal Rifle Corps or the Rifle Brigade. One volume is very much like another, and, except to the regiments themselves, or the military student, the series, now more than half a century old, has but little interest, and is practically unknown.

There are, too, in existence a number of handsome volumes dealing with particular regiments—written as a labour of love by officers. The necessarily high price of these books, even when they are obtainable, puts them quite beyond the reach of the ordinary civilian as well as soldier ; so that the general reader has no chance of understanding what individual regiments have done, and how, in conjunction with the Navy, they have built up the Empire.

There is obviously a gap in regimental histories, and it is the purpose of this series to fill it. But while an effort will be made to claim the interest of the general reader, the demands of the regiments themselves for perfect accuracy will not be neglected. It is hoped

that the volumes may contain the attributes of regimental records and at the same time enable the ordinary student of history to follow the fortunes of particular corps. Only the best authorities are drawn upon for facts. There will be no extraneous trimming. Such embellishment is unnecessary in connection with British military history—a history which, covering, as it does, so long a period, and almost every habitable quarter of the globe, has no equal among the histories of nations.

We have so many famous regiments that it is hard to choose one as a subject for an opening volume ; but it would be impossible to begin with a better and larger subject than the Rifle Brigade, not only because that renowned body has just celebrated its centenary, but also by reason of its unrivalled service in the field, and its unique position in the British Army. The Rifle Brigade has twenty-nine battle-honours, which give it in this respect the second place in the British Army, the Highland Light Infantry being a joint second, also with twenty-nine. The King's Royal Rifle Corps is first, with thirty-

three honours. All these three famous bodies are inseparably associated with the Peninsular War.

But though the Rifle Brigade does not possess the largest number of honours, it is claimed for it that it has seen more fighting than any other regiment in the British Army. On sixty occasions prior to the present war in South Africa, it has had battalions engaged in general actions and campaigns, so that, if the honours of a regiment are to be reckoned by the number of times it has been engaged, the regiment would have that large total to its credit. The principal cause of this was that through most of the Peninsular War and at Waterloo the regiment had three battalions employed, and two in the Crimea. This, too, was the only regiment of British riflemen present throughout the Peninsular campaign, and the only British riflemen at Waterloo, the rest of the riflemen present being Germans and other foreigners.

With respect to the non-appearance in the case of the Rifle Brigade of some of the honours which have been granted for engagements, the ruling of the Duke of Wellington was that a

regiment was not to be given the honour of a battle unless the colonel received a certain medal or clasp. Thus, in the Pyrenees in 1813 and 1814 all three battalions of the 95th Rifles, afterwards the Rifle Brigade, were heavily engaged, and had 3 officers and 66 men killed and 13 officers and 263 wounded. In 1848, when the Queen distributed the medal, 690 survivors were given that for "Pyrenees." Strange to say, the Rifle Brigade does not carry "Pyrenees" as an honour, although one corps which bears the name had one battalion engaged, and lost a few men, and could only claim a dozen medals in 1848. The honour of "Pyrenees" was withheld for a purely technical reason—namely, that the battles of the Pyrenees were the two fights of Sauroren, July 28 and 30, 1813; although the regiment was at this time fighting without ceasing in the Pyrenees.

It is a singular fact that although the authorities allowed "Pyrenees" to be inscribed on the clasps granted to the survivors in 1848 the Rifle Brigade was not permitted to bear the honour on its appointments. The distinction

has been withheld, therefore, for nearly ninety years. But the Rifle Brigade may still hope. The Welsh Regiment, in 1891, was authorised to bear "St. Vincent" as an honour, chiefly through the efforts of the late Duke of Coburg. The battle was fought on St. Valentine's Day, 1797, and the regiment, serving under Nelson, took part in it. For nearly a century, therefore, that corps was not allowed to bear an honour to which it had an absolutely clear title.

The most interesting honour of the Rifle Brigade is "Copenhagen," which begins the long list ending—at the time of writing—with "Khartoum." At Copenhagen the Rifle Corps fought under Lord Nelson, and were distributed through the fleet as sharpshooters. Nelson was so much pleased with the Riflemen on this occasion that he expressed a hope that the Government would increase the Rifle Corps. This was done in 1805, when a second battalion was added. A third was formed in 1809, and the fourth was added in 1857. In 1895 the officers of the Rifle Brigade purchased a medal given to a sergeant for his services at Copen-

hagen. For this great trophy no less a sum than £70 was paid, and it is justly regarded as one of the greatest treasures of the regiment. Nelson specially gave a silver medal to the non-commissioned officers and men of the Rifle Corps who were engaged at Copenhagen.

Honours were granted for eighteen of the battles, sieges and stormings of the Peninsular War, and with one exception—Albuhera—the 95th shared in them all. The 690 medals referred to carried 3469 clasps, one veteran receiving a medal containing no fewer than 14 clasps, ranging from Roleia to Toulouse. This medal, which was inscribed “Peter Marsh, 95th Foot,” was sold by auction in London on August 14, 1891, and fetched £23. A medal with 13 clasps was at the same time presented to a grand old soldier of the disbanded 5th Battalion of the 60th Royal American Regiment—the corps which is now known as the King’s Royal Rifles.

In two or three respects the Rifle Brigade differs from the rest of the British regiments. For one thing it does not carry colours, the

battle-honours being carried on the well-known regimental badge—a Maltese cross and wreath, surmounted by the imperial crown. This badge was adopted by the regiment about 1826, in order to bear the honours which had been granted. The Rifle Brigade has no motto. Another point of difference is this—like the Foot Guards, the Rifle Brigade has no regimental district, nor has the King's Royal Rifle Corps, and the two rifle regiments have a territorial connection only in this, that the Northern and Midland Districts are reserved for the Royal Rifles, and London and the Southern Districts for the Rifle Brigade. Ever since 1816, when the regiment was removed from the numbered regiments of the Line in recognition of its valiant services, it has been known as the Rifle Brigade ; and under that name alone it is known to-day.

In the matter of dress, too, the Rifle Brigade, on home service, is distinguished by the famous green uniform with black facings, and the peculiar rifle head-dress. On active service, however, the regiment assumes khaki and the helmet.

Upon one delicate but important point it is

necessary to touch. The Royal Rifles and the Rifle Brigade have much in common ; they are both very famous bodies in the British Army ; each possesses a magnificent roll of battle-honours, and it would seem as if there could be no cause for rivalry between them. But there have been from time to time controversies as to which is really the senior British rifle corps, and upon this subject much time and labour have been expended by champions of the two regiments. At the same time it is notorious that no two corps of the present day are more closely connected in every way, or more jealous for one another's glory, than are the two regiments who form the exclusive body known as the "Green Jackets."

The King's Royal Rifle Corps is unquestionably the older body, dating its origin from 1755, while the Rifle Brigade was not born until the year 1800 ; but there is this great difference between them, that while the Rifle Brigade was from the very first simply and solely composed of British troops, the 60th was, until 1824, to all intents and purposes a foreign body.

The 5th Battalion won for the King's Royal Rifles the sixteen Peninsular honours which the regiment possesses. This is a larger number of Peninsular distinctions than is worn by any other regiment,—one more than the Rifle Brigade has ; but those honours were gained by foreigners in British pay, whereas the Peninsular honours, and all other honours of the Rifle Brigade were won by British soldiers. The regimental historians of the King's Royal Rifle Corps themselves repeatedly refer to the foreign character of the regiment in the earlier years of its existence.

While upon this question one other point deserves notice. The 5th Battalion of the 60th was throughout the greater part of the Peninsular War split up into sections, which were here, there, and everywhere, doing hard and useful work wherever they were sent ; whereas the three battalions of the 95th fought in larger numbers, and in one notable affair—Tarbes—had the glory of the engagement all to themselves. This 5th or Jäger Battalion of the 60th was, however, the first green-

coated rifle *battalion* in the British Army, coming into existence two years before the 95th was raised. Its uniform — bottle-green cut-away coats with scarlet facings, white waistcoats, blue pantaloons, with black leather helmets and black belts—may be compared with the dress of the 95th, described in the opening chapter of this volume. But it must also be remembered that the uniform of the 60th at this time, and for many years afterwards, was the red coat of the ordinary infantry of the Line ; whereas the Rifle Corps, or 95th, were equally unquestionably the first green-coated *regiment* in the British Army.

In the preparation of the work many authorities have been consulted, and these are mentioned in their proper places. Probably no regiment has more complete records than the Rifle Brigade, or can reckon amongst its ranks more officers and men who have from time to time handed down the deeds of the regiment ; consequently the work of writing this volume has been much facilitated by the ready access afforded to original documents and records.

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CHAPTER I

THE RIFLE CORPS AND THE OLD NINETY-FIFTH

FOR a full century the Rifle Brigade has given its life and energy to uphold the British flag throughout the world. It has shared in some of the sternest sufferings and greatest victories of the Army, and has been closely associated with the two most famous fighting Englishmen on sea and land—Nelson and Wellington. The Continent in many parts, North and South America, the Crimea, North Africa, South Africa, India, Burma, Afghanistan, Egypt—in all these countries officers and men of the Rifle Brigade have been campaigners and have left their bones; and in the war which we are just now closing in South Africa the regiment has fought and suffered heavily. What William IV. said of the Rifle Brigade more

than seventy years ago applies as forcibly to-day as it did then—"Wherever there has been fighting, you have been employed; and wherever you have been employed, you have distinguished yourselves."

The Rifle Brigade came into existence as the result of representations made to the Government of the day by Colonel Coote Manningham and Lieutenant-Colonel the Honourable William Stewart—the latter an intimate friend of Nelson's. These officers urged the wisdom and advantage of raising a special body of men to be trained as riflemen, and so successful were they, that in January 1800 H.R.H. the Duke of York, Commander-in-Chief, ordered that detachments should be specially chosen from fifteen regiments of the Line and formed into an experimental corps of riflemen. These regiments were the 2nd Battalion Royals; the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 29th, 49th, 55th, 67th, 69th, 71st, 72nd, 79th, 85th, and 92nd Regiments. From each regiment two sergeants, two corporals, and thirty "private men" were selected for the duty; but they

were not to be considered as being drafted from their regiments, but merely as detached for the purpose named. They remained on the strength of their corps, and were clothed by their respective colonels. So quickly was the task carried out, that within three months the first parade had been held at Horsham, where the detachments had assembled under Manningham and Stewart.

The memory of the first-named officer is preserved to-day in an old song of which the opening verse runs :—

Oh ! Colonel Coote Manningham he was the man,
For he invented a capital plan :
He raised a Corps of Riflemen
To fight for England's glory !

The poet was not highly gifted, but he meant well, and his verses have achieved a fame that has been denied to more ambitious efforts.

The non-commissioned officers and men had abandoned their pikes and muskets on leaving their regiments, and were now armed with the Baker rifle. This instrument, judged from the

standpoint of these days, was a clumsy enough weapon, but, crude as it was, it was greatly superior to the arm then in common use—the erratic and wonder-working Brown Bess. The Brown Bess discharged a spherical ball of which fourteen went to the pound ; its effective range was only about 200 yards, but it would not carry straight for more than half that distance. The new weapon, which was the invention of a well-known London gunmaker named Ezekiel Baker, weighed $10\frac{1}{2}$ lbs., with sword ; was sighted for 100 to 200 yards ; was seven-grooved, with a bore of $\cdot 623$, and had a total length of 3 feet 10 inches. This bullet, too, was spherical, and as the ball had to be placed in a greased leather patch, considerable force was needed to drive it home. For this purpose specially made mallets were issued, but they were soon discontinued. The mallets were made of hard wood, with a handle about 6 inches long, pierced with a hole at the end of the handle, to fasten a string through.

The new weapon was viewed with grave disfavour by some of the prominent men of

the day. Lord Cornwallis, at that time Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, was a strong opponent to the introduction and employment of the rifle, which he alluded to as a "very amusing plaything." On the other hand, there were those who imagined that the rifle was going to achieve unheard-of results, who believed that it was a weapon of amazing power, and prophesied all sorts of impossible performances. In the regiment itself there were those who were proud to demonstrate what the thing could actually do. Amongst these exponents were an officer named Wade and a couple of privates named Smeaton and Spurry. Wade, who was a major, an Irishman, and the owner of "Hamlet" as a Christian name, was a clever shot, and he and the privates used to go through a startling exhibition with the rifle. They held up a target for each other at a distance of 150 yards and 200 yards, and practised at that range, to the horror of some of the beholders. The exhibition was both clever and dangerous, and one day the Earl of Chatham, who was

watching, observed that great risk must be run by the markers. The officer, however, assured the Earl that there was no danger, and by way of proving his statement ordered a Rifleman to hold out a target, and this, at the distance of 200 yards, he hit. When the spectator expressed astonishment at the feat, Wade remarked, "Oh, we all do it," and thereupon went himself, held up a target, and proved his words.

A peculiar distinction of the Rifle Brigade is that its blood was shed before the regiment was actually embodied. The detachments had trained for a few months near Windsor, when three of them were allowed to accompany Sir James Pulteney's expedition against Ferrol, in North-West Spain. These three were permitted to go at the request of Stewart, the other detachments being subsequently ordered to rejoin their regiments. The expedition, consisting of more than 10,000 British troops, landed near Ferrol in August 1800, and gained possession of the heights; but in spite of this success the British general, de-

spairing of triumph, re-embarked his forces for Gibraltar. The detachments had four officers and eight men wounded, including Stewart, who, with two other officers of the corps, returned to England, the rest proceeding to Gibraltar.

In October 1800 the Rifle Corps was re-organised and officially gazetted, the officers' commissions being antedated to the very day that the Experimental Riflemen received their baptism of fire at Ferrol—August 25. Mann-ingham was appointed commanding officer, and to this permanent body Stewart and the rest of the officers from the experimental regiment were transferred. The Rifle Corps thus became an actual separate, recognised institution, and in accordance with the custom of the time was known as "Manningham's Sharpshooters," the corps taking its name from its chief, and appearing in the *Army Lists* of the day as "A Corps of Riflemen."

At this period the corps was principally composed of volunteers from Irish Fencible regiments, and was distinguished by a special uniform. That of the officers was a dark

green jacket, with black velvet collar and cuffs, and trimmed with black cord and silver buttons; dark green pantaloons and Hessian boots. Round the waist a crimson barrel sash, with tassels and cords, was worn, and the head-dress was a helmet of the light dragoon pattern, black, with silver mountings, bearskin crest, a green feather and a turban—a wonderful but effective combination. The pouch and sword belts were of black leather, the pouch-belt having a silver chain and whistle. Altogether this uniform was a striking one, and well calculated to enable the Rifle officer to hold his own even in days when splendid garments were by no means uncommon amongst military men.

The non-commissioned officers and rank and file had a plain jacket with short skirts looped up in front; pantaloons and half-boots, and a tall, peakless cap, somewhat bell-topped, with a green feather, the sergeants being distinguished by a whistle on the pouch-belt. The men were armed with what was known as a rifle-gun, the sword of which could be

used also as a bayonet; a cartridge pouch, and a powder-horn suspended from a cord slung over the shoulder.

If the Riflemen were not yet fit to accomplish what they subsequently became able, in the proud words of Wellington, to perform—"go anywhere and do anything"—they were at any rate so perfect that they were of infinite value both on land and sea. They lived in days when a great deal more was required of Thomas Atkins than is expected from him now.

The corps was not more than a year old when one of its companies was distributed amongst the ships with which Nelson was to become the victor at Copenhagen. It was in this famous fight that the first of the regiment's officers fell in action. This was Lieutenant and Adjutant J. A. Grant, whose head was cut off by a cannon-ball while he was fighting the quarter-deck guns of the *Isis*. Stewart was in command of the troops serving at Copenhagen, these being the company of Riflemen and the 49th Foot. That old

regiment—now the 1st Battalion Royal Berkshire—shares with the Rifle Brigade the battle-honour of “Copenhagen.” In referring to this fight Nelson said, “The Hon. Colonel Stewart did me the honour to be on board the *Elephant*, and himself, with every officer and soldier under his orders, shared with pleasure the toils and dangers of the day.”

This unique honour needs something more than passing mention. The battle of Copenhagen was fought on April 2, 1801, Admiral Sir Hyde Parker being in command of the British fleet, with Lord Nelson as his second. The total number of British ships was about fifty-three, including eighteen line-of-battle-ships, and frigates, sloops, bombs, and fire-ships. The enemy's force is not precisely known, but James estimates that there were opposed to us twenty-five sail of the line, with many smaller vessels. But Parker and Nelson had not only the fleet to fight; they had also to grapple with shore batteries and floating batteries, in most formidable strength. There was a mile of shipping, mounting in all

628 guns, flanked at the north end, or that nearest the town, by two artificial islands, called the Crown Batteries, with furnaces for heating shot, and both commanded by two-decked block-ships. The entrance into the harbour and docks, which were in the heart of the city, was protected by a chain thrown across it, as well as by batteries on the northern shore, but more particularly by the Crown Batteries alluded to. There were, besides, many vessels, some with furnaces on board for heating shot, skilfully moored off the mouth of the harbour. A little to the south-west of the floating line of defence were several guns and mortar batteries. These defences were in themselves formidable enough; when it is added that there were men who were skilful as well as brave to work the guns, the task which the British had before them can be understood. Denmark was determined that no enemy should invade its shores. When the action had been continued for five hours, during four of which it was desperately contested, Nelson sent his famous letter to the

Crown Prince of Denmark—the letter in which he said that “the brave Danes are the brothers, and should never be the enemies, of the English.” Nelson pointed out that the line of defence which covered the shores had struck to the British flag ; but that if the firing were continued on the part of Denmark he must set on fire all the prizes that he had taken, without having the power to save the men who had so nobly defended them. This letter, which was the opening of negotiations that ultimately led to peace, is one of the most famous in modern British history, and the Rifle Brigade, through its head—Stewart—is closely identified with it. Stewart’s own words may be quoted :—“I was with Lord Nelson when he wrote the note to the Crown Prince of Denmark, proposing terms of arrangement. A cannon-ball struck the head of the boy who was crossing the cabin with the light to seal it. ‘Bring another candle,’ said his lordship. I observed that I thought it might very well be sent as it was, for it would not be expected that the usual forms could be observed at such

a moment. 'That is the very thing I should wish to avoid, Colonel,' replied he; 'for if the least appearance of precipitation were perceptible in the manner of sending this note, it might spoil all.' Another candle being now brought, his lordship sealed the letter, carefully enclosed in an envelope, with a seal bearing his coat-of-arms, coronet, etc., and delivered it to the officer in waiting to receive it." Stewart was also the recipient of other letters from Nelson which have become historical.

The British triumph was bought at a heavy price. According to the official returns there was a total of 225 killed and 688 wounded. The British ships suffered greatly, but the Danish vessels were in infinitely worse case, for most of them were literally knocked to pieces. Of the eighteen floating batteries thirteen were either captured or destroyed. There are no correct figures of the Danish loss, but their commander-in-chief, according to the lowest estimate, reckoned his killed and wounded as between 1600 and 1800 men.

The experimental Rifle Corps had by this

time been fully tried, and had not been in any way found wanting. It had proved itself, and was henceforth to have a sure place amongst British regiments. On Christmas Day, 1802, the corps was numbered the 95th Rifles, and so took the name by which the regiment in the earlier years of its existence earned for itself exceptional distinction. That was the beginning of a record which has continued untarnished to the present day.

The 95th had a second battalion added to it in May 1805. A year later three companies of the regiment accompanied the expedition to South America under Sir Samuel Auchmuty, these being part of a reinforcement of 3000 men sent to the British troops in that quarter of the world. This was one of Britain's unlucky campaigns, and one of several of that class in which the regiment has been called upon to serve. The facility of the conquest of the Cape of Good Hope had led the British commanders in that part of the world to believe that they could carry their operations with equal success elsewhere, and Admiral Sir Home Popham, having got 1500 troops

from Sir David Baird, sailed on an unauthorised expedition against Buenos Ayres, which place capitulated on June 28, 1806. This little buccaneering triumph was hailed with delight at home ; but the joy was tempered by the news, shortly afterwards received, that the Spaniards had recovered from their surprise and panic, and had overpowered and captured the garrison. This was on August 12, but Popham continued to blockade the mouth of the river until the arrival of reinforcements from home should enable him to resume the offensive.

When Auchmuty reached the Rio de la Plata he found what was left of his countrymen cooped up in Maldonado, almost without provisions, and exposed constantly to the insults of the enemy. Considering that town to be unfitted for a depot and place of security, he determined to invest the fortified seaport of Monte Video. But Sir Samuel found that he had a bigger task than he had expected to deal with, and that some of the difficulties seemed insurmountable. So strong were the defences of the port that it seemed almost useless to

bombard them, and in the first five days of the firing nearly the whole of the powder in the fleet was used.

As the ammunition was rapidly giving out, as there was a want of proper entrenching tools, and as a force quite equal to the British was rapidly advancing to raise the siege, Auchmuty resolved to storm the place, though the breach which had been made was as yet scarcely practicable. An hour before daybreak on February 2, 1807, the British advanced, but in the darkness the head of the column missed the breach, and for twenty minutes had their dense ranks torn by a heavy fire as they remained under the ramparts. But when the day dawned Captain Renny, of the 40th Foot, discovered the breach, and led the stormers to the assault. Renny was the first to mount. He was shot dead at once ; but, inspired by his example, the assailants pressed on, and with such valour and determination that they rushed the town, swept the streets of all the guns, and captured those who made any resistance. By daytime the town was in Sir Samuel's possession, at a cost of about

600, a very large proportion of his total force. Heavy though these losses were, those of the enemy were greater. More than 1000 fell, 2000 were made prisoners, and 1000 got away in boats.

In this affair the Rifles had one officer, Dickenson, and ten men killed, and two officers and nineteen non-commissioned officers and men wounded. Besides being specially thanked in general orders, silver medals were given to eleven sergeants in recognition of their valour.

This success, great though it was, did not compensate us for the disastrous attack on Buenos Ayres, and in June another reinforcement of 4200 men was sent to the same destination, General Whitelocke being made commander-in-chief, and ordered to attempt to recover Buenos Ayres. The new force included a wing of the 1st Battalion 95th, of which regiment eight companies were now in the field in South America. Whitelocke's total forces numbered 7800 effective fighting men, with 18 field guns, while opposed to him in Buenos Ayres were 15,000 armed men with more than

200 pieces of cannon. These men were stationed on the flat roofs of the houses, but, incredible as it seems, so little was thought of them that on entering the town and being met with deadly showers of musketry, stones, and grenades from the roofs, the British soldiers were unable to fire a shot, orders having been given that there should be no discharge until they had reached the great square.

But in spite of these fatal showers and the guns at the barricades, Auchmuty seized 82 pieces of cannon, an enormous quantity of ammunition, and 600 prisoners. Whitelocke, too, had been successful, but the advantages were dearly paid for. Three British regiments, overcome by the fire to which they could not make effective answer, were forced to surrender, and the loss of the assailants was 2500.

Next day the Spanish general offered to restore all the prisoners who had been taken, on condition that the British forces should entirely evacuate Monte Video and all the settlements they held on the Rio de la Plata. So great was the dismay arising out of the calamities of the

assault, and so serious seemed the further progress of the expedition, that, despite the great successes of the British, the Spanish terms were agreed to. So fierce was the fury of the public at home that the Government were forced to bring Whitelocke to trial. In January 1809 he was court-martialed, and dismissed the service.

In these unfortunate operations against Buenos Ayres the 95th had no fewer than 15 officers and 278 men killed and wounded, a total which shows how great a part the regiment had in the fighting.

Having so thoroughly shown their mettle, the Riflemen were ordered home from South America, with "Monte Video" to their credit as an honour, and what should have been another in Buenos Ayres, with proper management.

While the eight companies had been serving on the other side of the Atlantic, the headquarters wings of the two battalions were in Denmark with the force under Lord Cathcart, in connection with the Copenhagen Expedition of 1807. By that time France had secured the

service of the Russian and Swedish fleets, and Napoleon and Alexander—strange temporary friends—reckoned on securing the fleet of Denmark, and by such a union threatening once more that naval supremacy which was then, as now, so vital to Great Britain's existence. But that hope was destroyed by the appearance off Elsinore of a British expedition, which had been secretly and quickly organised, and which demanded the surrender of the Danish fleet, on a pledge being given that it should be returned at the end of the war. The demand was refused, and accordingly Copenhagen was bombarded on September 8 by Admiral Gambier and Lord Cathcart. The entire Danish fleet, which included 18 ships of the line, 15 frigates and 37 brigs, surrendered and was brought into British ports. The British force of 27 ships of the line, carrying 20,000 troops, part of a force originally destined for the Elbe, had been joined by Cathcart's force of 10,000, which had been acting with the Swedes in Pomerania. Before Copenhagen was subjugated the 95th was at Kiøge, operating against a body of militia which

had been assembled hastily. The three or four batteries of the Danes opened fire on Wellesley immediately. He did not delay his attack for a moment. Sending out the 95th and his artillery to cover the advance, he moved upon the enemy with the 92nd Highlanders. The fight was short and sharp. The Danish militia fled, leaving the brunt of the action to be borne by the regulars ; but the regulars in turn succumbed and were forced to surrender with the guns. This was the first time Sir Arthur Wellesley, who was already famous as an Indian fighter, appeared as an officer in high command in Europe.

While dealing with this particular quarter of the Continent, it will be most convenient, so that the story of the Peninsula may be told uninterruptedly, to refer to the disastrous Walcheren Expedition—that undertaking from which so much was expected and which had such appalling results. The expedition against Antwerp sailed on July 28, 1809, and was the largest and most formidable which had ever put to sea in modern times. It included 37 ships

of the line, 23 frigates, 33 sloops, 82 gunboats, and a large number of transports, with 40,000 land troops, with stores, battering-rams, and everything that could be needed for the heavy task in hand. The land forces were under the command of the Earl of Chatham, and the fleet under Sir Richard Strachan. On July 30, 30,000 troops were disembarked in Walcheren and seized Middleburg; another division captured Cadsand, and South Beveland, with the fort of Bahtz, commanding the junction of the East and West Scheldt, surrendered. So great was the success of the British that even all the French military writers were agreed that their vigorous advance to Antwerp must have caused that city to fall without resistance; but Lord Chatham, the General-in-Chief, though "a respectable veteran," says Alison, who damned him with scant, faint praise, had none of the energy of his family, and, in defiance of common sense, he resolved in the first place to besiege Flushing. On August 16 that fortress, after three days' bombardment, surrendered with its garrison of 6000. But Chatham had lost price-

less time, and when, on the 26th, he moved forward, the French fleet had been taken above Antwerp, the city had been put in a state of defence, and 30,000 troops collected.

By this time the pestilential air of the marshes was causing havoc in the British force, and, further advance being deemed impossible, the troops were withdrawn into Walcheren, which it was intended to hold. Fever, however, wrought such terrible mischief that to save the troops at all it was necessary to abandon the whole gigantic enterprise, and hurry home. The task was given up, and the remnant of the splendid army re-embarked before Christmas for England. But of that fine force which had sailed, 7000 had perished by sickness, and many of those who lived never recovered from the disease.

An officer of the Light Brigade, which was under Major-General Stewart, wrote that that officer considered, from the nature of the service they were likely to be employed in, and probably cut off from their baggage by dykes and rivers, that small black knapsacks, with brown

straps, would prove of essential service to the officers. For these they paid half-a-guinea before leaving England. However, subsequently, "as he expected us to carry them at brigade field-days, some little discussion arose on that head."

After the fighting which took place offensive operations seemed at an end. "We were surrounded with abundance; our days were occupied in the sports of the field, our evenings spent at each other's quarters in idle and pleasant conversation; pay was issued almost to the day that it was due. Provisions of all descriptions were offered for sale at a very low rate; tea, sugar and coffee were not half the price as in England; wines, brandy, hollands and liqueurs, might be purchased for a mere trifle, and fat fowls or ducks for tenpence a pair. In this land of plenty we were lulled into a fatal security, for the soldiers fell ill, staggered and dropped in the ranks, seized by dreadful fevers, and with such rapidity did this malady extend that in fourteen days 12,068 soldiers were in hospital on board ship, or sent

to England; the deaths were numerous and sometimes sudden, convalescence hardly ever secure, ultimately destroying the constitution, and was eventually the destruction of thousands in far distant climes." When the sick officers and soldiers stepped ashore in England an onlooker exclaimed, "There goes the King's hard bargains!" "On the evening we got ashore," the narrator adds, "a fine, healthy young sergeant brought me the orderly-book, and on visiting the hospital next morning, I heard he had been dead one hour. So much for the Walcheren malady! . . . In the short space of six months the English coast had been inundated with sick soldiers and scattered regiments from the Land's End to Yarmouth."

It was of this unhappy and grossly mismanaged expedition that the famous epigram was penned :—

Lord Chatham, with his sword undrawn,
 Stood waiting for Sir Richard Strachan ;
 Sir Richard, longing to be at 'em,
 Stood waiting for the Earl of Chatham.

The 2nd Battalion of the 95th was that

which had the fate to serve at Walcheren. In less than six weeks the battalion lost more than 300 men through sickness, and so seriously weakened was it by the campaign that for some time it was unfit for active service. No sooner, however, did the men recover than they were sent out, one or two companies at a time, to the Peninsula.

As the 95th had such long and costly dealings with the French infantry in the Peninsula, it is instructive, by way of comparison, to furnish brief particulars of the composition of that arm of the enemy. At that time the Imperial Army of France was in every respect superior to the armies of the Republic. It was more scientifically regulated, and better supplied with money, clothing, arms and ammunition. After the Revolution, General Foy observes, the general officers of the French Army exchanged the vague denomination of lieutenant-general and *maréchal de camp* for those of general of division and general of brigade, as more precise and significant. Bodies of infantry, consisting of three battalions, were then

called demi-brigades, but afterwards Napoleon restored the name of regiment, giving the rank of colonel to its chief.

Usually a regiment consisted of three battalions, although in the Peninsular War regiments were formed into five battalions of six companies each, and had but one eagle, which as a rule accompanied the 1st Battalion.

The battalion of infantry consisted of nine companies, including one of grenadiers. A picked company, called *voltigeurs*, composed of men of small stature, but of special intelligence and activity, was subsequently added by Napoleon. These famous little fellows constituted the light infantry of the French Army, and habitually performed the service of *tirailleurs*. An action always began with swarms of *tirailleurs* on foot and on horseback, a species of fighting which was excellently well adapted to the French spirit.

The *tirailleurs* harassed the enemy, got clear of his masses by their swiftness, and escaped from his artillery by their dispersion. In a word, these sharp troops were incessantly

watching for a chance to do the foe a mischief, and no sooner was the chance seen than it was seized. They were mobile troops capable of being moulded into any desired use, and their clever officers made the most of their plasticity. It was these five-feet-high soldiers who brought in the giants of Germany and Croatia as prisoners by hundreds, and distinguished themselves by their alertness and activity wherever they were employed.

Such was one section of the French Army with which the 95th for several years was in constant touch, and such were the men against whom our own light troops were unceasingly called upon to sharpen their wits. These agile Frenchmen were in every way fit foemen for even the splendid fellows of the 95th, and many were the noble combats between the two kindred bodies during the Peninsular War.

It was because British military men had seen the wonderful results achieved by these light troops of France that so many urgent representations were made to the Government to raise a similar body in connection with the

Army. But a hundred years ago our military authorities were slow and stubborn and conservative in their methods of doing things, and it was only after incessant striving on the part of those who believed in the powers of riflemen that these amazingly successful soldiers were brought into existence.

General Foy, who spoke in the highest manner of the discipline and dauntless spirit of the British infantry, said, in 1818, that several regiments of the Line, such as the 43rd, the 51st, the 52nd, etc., were called light infantry regiments, although these corps, as well as the light companies of the other battalions, had nothing light about them except the name, for they were armed, and, excepting some slight change in the decorations, clothed like the rest of the infantry. "It was considered," added the General, "that the English soldier did not possess sufficient intelligence and address to combine with the regular duty of the Line the service of inspiration of the sharpshooter. When the necessity of a special light division began to be felt, the best marksmen of different

corps were at first selected ; but it was afterwards found expedient to devote exclusively to the office of sharpshooters the eight battalions of the 60th, the three of the 95th, and some of the foreign corps. These troops are armed with the rifle. During the last war, companies of these riflemen were always attached to the different brigades. The echoing sound of their horns answered the twofold purpose of directing their own movements, and of communicating such manœuvres of the enemy as would otherwise be unobserved by the general in command." With regard to the 60th it should be remarked that only the 5th Battalion had rifles, the rest being employed in America with smooth-bores.

Before speaking of the work of the 95th in a campaign which was to produce so many British triumphs and give lasting glory to the regiment, it is needful to glance briefly at the state of affairs which they were called on to encounter, and the rigours of an undertaking which is without parallel.

CHAPTER II

THE PENINSULA AND ITS HORRORS

THOROUGHLY to understand the devotion of the Rifle Brigade in the early years of which it is so justly proud, and to estimate the value of its work, reference must be made to the horrors of the Peninsular campaign. Generally, it may be said that there was no suffering, and no triumph in the Peninsula in which the old 95th did not share. Of the privations of the British Army under Wellington we have many varied records, ranging from a soldier high in office like the Marquis of Londonderry to those of Sergeant Joseph Donaldson, of the 94th Scots Brigade. Of the doings of the 95th itself we have the valuable records of Captain Kincaid and Quartermaster Surtees, Costelloe's *Adventures*, Leach's *Rough Sketches*, Rifleman Harris's

Recollections, and the recently published letters and journals of another officer of the 95th named Simmons. All these relate to the days of the Peninsular War and Waterloo, and the doings of the 95th in those momentous times. These writers, like Napier, Gleig, and other historians of the campaigns, were actual witnesses, and told of what they saw ; while among many compilers and annotators there are authors like the picturesque Southey and the monumental Alison. From sources such as these one may glean a striking picture of the country and times which have become indelibly connected with the regiment.

When the 95th went to the Peninsula, Spain and Portugal were in pretty much the same condition—they were both bad. The Spanish nobility were sunk to the lowest state of degradation ; the people were ruled relentlessly by the clergy, who were both avaricious and domineering ; there was universal national mismanagement ; towns were deserted, and fields were uncultivated, because there were no hands to till them. The army was a mockery, the

few remaining soldiers having neither pay nor clothing, and in some cases not even arms. As for the officers, they were taken from the lowest classes, and were not ashamed to wait as servants, in their uniforms, behind the chairs of the grandees. All the arsenals were empty, and the very foundries no longer worked, except spasmodically. The fortresses had neither stores nor provisions enough to keep alive the wretched garrisons that held them. Yet, adds Lord Londonderry to this picture, the spirit of Spain was far from being broken. Driven from the higher and prouder circles, it took refuge in the peasantry. So in Portugal—only in the peasantry was to be found all that was valuable in the national character. Despite the demoralising example of their superiors, they were a brave and high-spirited race to the last.

It was to a land like this that the 95th was to journey, and with its comrades in arms fight, and suffer for many years, so that the soil could be cleared of its oppressors.

While Wellington was getting ready in England there was tumult and bloodshed in

Spain. On May 2, 1808, there began that tragedy in Madrid which Spain bitterly remembered, not only because of the blood of her citizens which was shed, but of the results which sprang from it, and the long and awful struggle which it opened. There was a conflict between the people and the French. The firing continued for nearly three hours, with considerable slaughter on both sides ; and it was not till after the most strenuous exertions of the authorities, both Spanish and French, that order was restored.

The French showed no mercy, and many military executions added to the city's horrors. In the course of the slaughter one of the Mamelukes broke into a house from which a musket had been fired. He was run through with a sword by a very beautiful girl, who was instantly cut down by his companions. A man who got his livelihood by the chase, and was an unerring shot, spent eight-and-twenty cartridges upon the French, bringing down a man with each. When his ammunition was spent, he armed himself with a dagger, and, rushing

against a body of the enemy, fought till the last gasp.

The Spaniards did not lose their chances of retaliation. They soon gave terrible proof of their ferocity. French stragglers had been assassinated, and the sick, the medical attendants, the couriers, and all upon whom the Spaniards could lay hands, were barbarously butchered. The fate of one French officer was horrible. He had been sent on a mission to Portugal, previous to the breaking out of hostilities, and was on his return, travelling in the ordinary mode, without arms, attached to no army, engaged in no operations of war ; but, being recognised as a Frenchman, he was seized, mutilated, and then placed between two planks, and, while living, sawn asunder.

Lord Londonderry has put on record a terrible picture of the state of the British force, when Moore began his retreat to Corunna. The Spaniards, contrary to Moore's entreaty, had fallen back in the same direction as himself, the result being that they filled all the houses. Typhus fever raged amongst the troops, and the

roads were choked with men and horses and vehicles. These miserable wretches had no provisions, no ammunition for either guns or muskets, and were almost naked ; while the English were little better.

The men had been kept in something like subordination, in the belief that Astorga would be a resting-place. Robbery, plunder, and drink had worked mischief ; some had fallen into the hands of the enemy, or victims to the bitter weather ; but the army was still an army amenable to discipline. Restraint, however, disappeared with the coming of the knowledge that there was to be no rest, and when the *matériel* of a whole division had been destroyed, so that the retreat could be continued with less trammel, order vanished. "From that hour we no longer resembled a British army. There was still the same bravery in our ranks ; but it was only at moments when the enemy was expected to come on that our order and regularity returned ; and, except in that single point, we resembled rather a crowd of insubordinate rebels, in full flight before victorious

soldiers, than a corps of British troops moving in the presence of an enemy.” •

When he began his retreat it was the intention of Sir John Moore to fall back upon Vigo, and there embark his army in the transports which had been ordered round to receive him. With this view, when at Benevente, he had despatched General Craufurd, with 3000 men, including part of the 95th, along the nearer but steeper road by Orense, to prevent any attempt of the enemy to gain ground upon him with a light column—he taking the more circuitous but better route, by Astorga and Villa Franca. At the former place he was joined by Baird’s division. Here, everything, whether public or private property, for the removal of which means were wanting, was destroyed ; and the army began its march on the following morning under circumstances more disheartening than ever.

The season was remarkably inclement ; the ridges were covered with deep snow, and the fields and roads almost impassable. The condition of the army was melancholy. The

rain came down in torrents ; men and horses foundered at every step : the former worn out through fatigue and want of nutriment—the latter sinking under their loads, and dying upon the march. The few waggons which had hitherto kept up fell, one by one, to the rear ; the ammunition was destroyed, and the carriages were abandoned. Indeed, it seemed likely, if this system of forced marches continued, that one half the army would never reach the coast.

Whole regiments strayed from their colours. As often as a wine-house came in their way scenes of the most shocking description ensued. The army moved by divisions, the main body keeping a day's march ahead of the reserve and rear-guard. The former reached Benivedre on the 31st, and at an early hour on January 1 was ordered to leave it. But when the rear-guard came up the place was full of stragglers, all desperately drunk. Some lay upon the ground insensible ; some went about exhibiting all kinds of foolery ; while others, whom the wine had maddened, threatened death to all who came in their way.

At this time the enemy's cavalry, though they seldom sought an opportunity of coming to blows, pressed closely on the British rear. The two armies marched for miles in sight of each other. No pause whatever could be made, and every one who proved unable, either from intoxication or weariness, to push on had to be left behind. But the multitudes who lingered in Benivedre were so great, that it was not till every effort to rouse them had been made in vain that they were left to their fate. Even after the rear-guard had marched, a small detachment of cavalry endeavoured to cover them; nor was it till the enemy was seen approaching in force that they retired.

Then followed a scene frequently described, but imperfectly understood, says Lord Londonderry, excepting by an eye-witness. The French dragoons, pursuing our patrol, galloped through the midst of a crowd of men, women, and children, wantonly slashing to the right and left, without regard to the age or sex of the object of their fury. British troops never

looked upon a spectacle more appalling than those few presented, who, having come up with the column bleeding and mangled by sabre cuts, were, by order of the General, paraded through the ranks as a warning to their comrades.

“We reached Villa Franca on the 2nd, having performed a distance of sixty miles in two days. Here the greater part of the cavalry took up its quarters—a small detachment only remaining with the reserve at Cacabelos. Like Benivedre, this town was filled with drunken and disorderly men, by whom the most violent outrages had been committed, not only upon the natives, but upon our own magazines. A store of wine had been broken open, and the wine either drunk or wantonly spilt; and a considerable quantity of forage, of which we stood so much in need, was wantonly destroyed. One man was executed here, being detected in the act of marauding; but the discipline of the army was by this time too much impaired to be very seriously affected by example. Similar

offences were committed wherever opportunities occurred, and with the recklessness of men who considered that their cause was desperate."

The retreat was continued in circumstances of horror which have never been surpassed; but the most harrowing accounts, Lord Londonderry did not hesitate to say, fell far short of the reality. "As many as forty miles were performed in one march, but that march comprehended not the day only, but the night. This was more than our exhausted men could endure, and they dropped by whole sections on the way-side, and died. Not men only, but women and children, were subject to this miserable fate. Moore's army had carried along with it more than the too large proportion of women allotted by the rules of the service to armies in the field; and these poor wretches now heightened the horror of passing events by a display of suffering even more acute than that endured by their husbands. Some were taken in labour on the road, and in the open air, amidst showers of sleet and snow, gave birth to infants, which, with their

mothers, perished as soon as they had seen the light. Others, carrying, some of them, two children on their backs, toiled on, and, when they came to look to the condition of their burdens, they would probably find one or both frozen to death. Then the depth of moral degradation to which they sank—their oaths and cries, uttered under the influence of intoxication, were hardly less appalling than the groans which burst from them, as all hope abandoned them, and they lay down to die.”

Every hour the British Army became more and more unfit for service, and its resources wasted away at every mile. Whole waggon-loads of clothing, arms, shoes, and other necessities, which had just arrived from England, were met, and after the men had helped themselves to those articles of which they stood in need, the residue was destroyed. Two bullock-cars, loaded with dollars to the amount of £25,000, were found to be immovable. The casks which contained the money were stove in, and the treasure was thrown from the road down a precipice. The know-

ledge that the money lay among the cliffs tempted many men to lag behind, who fell into the hands of the enemy, or perished from cold. But everything was done now as if our case was absolutely desperate. Guns were abandoned, as fast as the horses which dragged them were knocked up; and the very sick and wounded were left behind in the waggons, when the bullocks or mules could proceed no further.

Not the least of the horrors of the Peninsula arose from the want of skilled medical attention. Sergeant Donaldson, who had experience of the hospital as well as of the field, said there was a great want of proper attendants, and often during the night he heard the sick and wounded crying for assistance which was never given. There was also a scarcity of medical officers during the war, and he knew of cases of wounded men waiting for three days after a battle before their wounds could be dressed. Of these it might safely be calculated that one half were lost to the service. These "medical men" were mostly boy apothecaries, who,

having studied a session or two, were "thrust into the Army as a huge dissecting-room, where they might mangle with impunity, until they were drilled into an ordinary knowledge of their business. Owing to their incapacity sufferers were quickly laid to their rest. In the field they did even more mischief, being but partially acquainted with anatomy. There was enough of what medical men call 'bold practice.' In cutting down upon a ball for the purpose of extracting it, the chances were ten to one that they would sever an artery they knew not how to stem; this, however, gave them no concern, for, clapping a piece of lint or a bandage, or a piece of plaster on to the wound, they would walk off very composedly to mangle some other poor wretch, leaving the former to his fate."

To all the privations named must be added that of lack of food. At many periods the British troops were in a state of semi-starvation, and often went into action hungry and exhausted. At the time of the battle of Talavera, for instance, they had no other rations than half

a pound of wheat, unground, each man, per day, with a few ounces of flour, and a quarter of a pound of goat's flesh twice in the week. And yet the Spanish authorities had the effrontery to assert that the British were actually over-supplied, while Cuesta, one of their generals, accused them of robbing the peasantry. Such also was the misery endured at this period, arising from the want of forage, that hundreds of horses had either perished or become unfit for service, and the guns were, in consequence, nearly unhorsed. After the battle of Talavera, where British blood had been shed abundantly for Spain, although Cuesta had more horses than he required, he refused Wellington's request for ninety, to replace those which had been killed.

Side by side with the evils spoken of as inseparable from war were the horrors arising from revenge. The Portuguese troops were filled with the most intense hatred of the French, and frequently set their officers at defiance so that they could satisfy their passions. In *The Subaltern* the Rev. G. R. Gleig, who

served as an officer in the Peninsula before he entered the Church, says that the thirst for vengeance caused the perpetration of the most terrible deeds, and he relates an example which came under his personal notice. One afternoon, near Bedart, a Portuguese regiment of caçadores broke its ranks and rushed to two or three cottages on the roadside. With great difficulty the officers recalled most of their men, but a few kept to the cottages. Their absence was not noticed until, from a French cottage, isolated and surrounded by a garden, a woman's scream was heard, followed by a musket shot. Before any one could hasten up another shot was fired, and it was found that a caçadore had killed a poor old French peasant and his wife. The caçadore tried to escape, but was captured. He vowed that he had no regret for the deed, that his own parents had been murdered by the French, and his sister dishonoured, and that, as he had kept his oath to be revenged, he was not afraid to die. The man was hanged, and, says Gleig, no fewer than eighteen Spanish and Portuguese

soldiers were tucked up, in the course of that and the following days, to the branches of trees.

It is interesting to get a glimpse of the soldier of the Peninsula from his own point of view. He was, says Donaldson, one of the veriest slaves existing, forced to rise two or three hours before daybreak, so that he could begin his cleaning operations. He had to soap, flour and frizz his hair, or torture it into some uncouth shape which caused him acute pain, and prevented him from moving his head unless his body went with it. His musket was to burnish, his cap and cartridge box to polish with heel-ball, and his white breeches to pipe-clay. It therefore needed three or four hours to prepare himself for parade, and then he was so rigidly inspected, that, if a single hair stood out of place, punishment, in the shape of extra guard or drill, was inflicted. Added to this was the brutal treatment of some of the officers, men who had neither soul nor feeling, and who caned and flogged him without mercy for the least offence. At the end of all this there awaited

him, when worn out and unfit for further service, either a pass, to enable him to beg, or a pittance that was not enough to support existence.

Pathetic indeed is the picture which has been drawn of the Riflemen at some stages of the Peninsular War. At one time the 95th was almost in rags. There was the bitterest of weather to endure, and so close to starvation were both officers and men that they were glad to eat acorns when they could get them. When the regiment left Salamanca it bivouacked in a wood four miles away. The rain had made the roads ankle deep in mud, and streams, which at other times could have been almost stepped over, were swollen to torrents through which the men had to force their way—starving and in rags though they were. Hunting round for something to eat they found some bullocks, dead or half dead, which, unable to drag their carts, had fallen on the road. These were immediately cut up with the sword, and after being half toasted at the camp fires, were eaten. The men were too famished to wait for the wet wood

to kindle thoroughly. Other Riflemen groped about in the wood on their hands and knees, searching for acorns which had fallen from the oak and cork trees. These, though bitter and unpalatable enough, served, at any rate, to stay the cravings of hunger, and they were devoured voraciously. In these privations officers and men shared alike, for few of the officers had even a biscuit. Lord Charles Spencer, then a second lieutenant in the regiment, was seen earnestly watching a few acorns which he was trying to roast on the embers of an unwilling fire. The men, as the only method of keeping themselves dry, cut off the branches of trees and lay on them.

To the lasting honour of the 95th Rifles it should be recorded that despite these and a hundred other terrible privations they maintained their discipline during the retreat of Corunna and at other times. Ever on the rear-guard, and constantly in touch with the French, they again and again turned on their pursuers and wrought havoc in their ranks.

CHAPTER III

BATTLE-HONOURS UNDER WELLINGTON

THE command of the British troops which this country sent out to the Peninsula in the summer of 1808 was in the first instance given to Wellington. Ten thousand men who had been collected for an expedition to South America were placed under his orders. Sir John Moore, who was then in Sweden with 12,000 men, was recalled in order to proceed to the Peninsula, and two smaller divisions sailed from Ramsgate and Margate.

Four companies of the 2nd Battalion 95th joined this expedition, and these, with the 5th Battalion 60th Royal American Regiment—now the King's Royal Rifle Corps—fired the opening shots of the war. They were also numbered amongst the very first who shed their

blood in that great campaign. The disembarkation of the troops took place in the early days of August. On the evening of the 15th the Rifles were ordered to push on to a village called Obidos, and drive a French picket from it. This they promptly did, there being but little opposition. Some of the victors, however, were too zealous, and, having pursued the enemy for three miles, they were surprised by a superior force of cavalry and infantry. But the Rifles made a desperate stand until relief came.

In this affair the 95th had Lieutenant Ralph Bunbury and two men killed, and Captain Pakenham and half-a-dozen men wounded. Bunbury was the first British officer to fall in the Peninsula.

The first serious encounter between the two armies took place on August 17. General Laborde, with some 5000 men, had occupied an elevated plateau in front of the village of Roleia, and he tried to keep the enemy in check ; but the heights were valiantly stormed by the British. In this engagement it was the duty of the Riflemen to cover the advance of

Wellington's centre column and maintain communication with his left. The country was excellently suited to the sort of work which the Riflemen had been trained to do, and they were sternly matched against the famous light troops of France. The result left no doubt as to which were superior, for the British were completely successful, the French being forced to abandon the position, with the loss of 600 men and 3 guns. Our own casualties numbered 500. "Roleia" is the first of the Rifle Brigade's Peninsular honours.

Not a week later the 95th took part in the battle of Vimiera, where it lost 37 men killed and 5 officers and 48 men wounded. The British force consisted of about 16,000 men, but scarcely any cavalry, while the French numbered 14,000. The fight was begun early on the morning of the 21st, when Laborde, with 6000 men, attacked the British centre. Shrapnel-shells were in use for the first time, and no sooner had the enemy reached the top of the hill than these and other missiles devastated his ranks. The repulse was com-

pleted at the point of the bayonet, and so furious was the British onslaught with the cold steel that the whole front line of one French regiment, numbering more than 300 men, was mown down like grass with the scythe. The object of the French was to drive the English into the sea, which was close in the British rear ; but instead the French were beaten at all points, and left 400 prisoners and 13 guns in the hands of the victors, and 2000 dead and wounded on the field of battle. The loss of the British was 720, but as only one-half of our force was actually engaged, a very heavy proportion of the casualties fell to the 95th.

It was in connection with this fight that the extraordinary incident happened of three successive British commanders-in-chief in less than thirty hours. Wellington was on the point of following up his victory when Sir Harry Burrard landed, and superseded him, at the same time ordering a halt when Wellington would have pressed eagerly forward. Scarcely, however, had Burrard taken charge when he was in turn superseded by Sir Hew Dalrymple.

As a result of Vimiera a convention was concluded at Cintra on August 30 for the evacuation of Portugal. So incensed were the British people because of the convention that a court of inquiry was held, before which the three generals just named appeared, and by which they were acquitted of all blame.

On the departure of the generals to attend the inquiry the command of the British force fell to Sir John Moore, who had landed with his corps at Lisbon. Moore entered Spain in November 1808, and his troops included the four companies of the 2nd Battalion of the 95th, which had already done such good service, and a wing of the 1st Battalion, which had campaigned with him in Sweden. Towards the end of December reinforcements under Sir David Baird joined Moore, these including the left wing of the 1st Battalion and the headquarters companies of the 2nd, so that the whole regiment was now with the Commander-in-Chief, the 1st Battalion, under Beckwith, being posted to the reserve, and the 2nd, under Wade, to Craufurd's famous brigade.

Of the terrible preliminaries to the battle of Corunna something has been told in the last chapter. Moore began his retreat on Christmas Eve 1808, and on January 11 following his disorganised troops entered Corunna, where the transports from Vigo arrived on the 14th. For two days the French, who had so successfully harried and kept up with the fugitive army, did not molest the embarkation, but on the 16th they advanced, 20,000 strong, to attack the British, now reduced to 14,000, and forced to fight at all costs, since the enemy were in front and the sea was in rear of them.

Such was the fury of the opening onslaught of the French that at first the British were driven from Elvina, a village in front of the centre, but the village was retaken, though not without great loss, and by nightfall the success of our forces was assured along the whole line.

Moore was mortally wounded in the moment of victory. He was struck on the left breast by a cannon-ball, and fell to the ground. The shoulder was shattered to pieces, the arm hanging by a film of skin, and the breast and lungs

almost laid bare. Some soldiers placed the general on a blanket, and carried him from the field of battle to his lodgings. When he knew that the French were defeated he turned to an old friend and said, "You know that I always wished to die this way." Just before he died he exclaimed, "I hope the people of England will be satisfied. I hope my country will do me justice." When life had ebbed away Moore was wrapped in his military cloak, and in silence, by the light of torches, was laid to rest in a rude grave on the ramparts of Corunna, such farewell volleys as he got coming from the distant artillery in the closing battle.

At ten o'clock that night the embarkation began in the boats which were in readiness. The troops filed silently to the beach, and the whole of them safely reached the transports in admirable order before daybreak. The rear-guard, 2000 strong, was the last to be withdrawn, and did not embark until three o'clock in the afternoon. When the British had left, the Spaniards manned the ramparts, and continued the defence for several days—long enough,

indeed, to allow not only the sick and wounded, stores, and artillery, but the prisoners also to be taken away. Not until the British ships had actually sailed were the French allowed to possess Corunna.

The battle cost us from 800 to 1000 men, while the French casualties numbered at least 2000—their own officers put it as high as 3000. During the retreat the total British loss was 4033. Of that number no fewer than 800 stragglers escaped into Portugal, and, joining with the sick who had been left in that country, formed a corps of 1876 men, which later, at Oporto and Talavera, did splendid service. At Villa Franca six 3-pounders, which had never been horsed, were thrown over the rocks, so that they should not fall into the hands of the enemy ; and at Corunna the guns, numbering twelve, were spiked and buried in the sand, where they were afterwards discovered by the French. But not a single gun, from first to last of the retreat, was captured by the French in battle.

In these operations the entire 95th shared.

The 2nd Battalion was with the 43rd and 52nd Foot in Craufurd's Brigade, forming the 3000 light troops which were detached from the main body to Vigo, to facilitate the embarkation of the British force. These sailed for England on January 21, 1809. The 1st Battalion remained with the reserve, and formed part of that rear-guard which, during the retreat, was incessantly suffering and fighting. On January 3, 1809, this battalion, with the 15th Hussars, was halted before the hamlet of Cacabelos. That engagement was vividly described by Lord Londonderry.

The enemy, who since the affair of the 28th had kept generally out of reach, showed a disposition on the 3rd to renew their system of attacking. A large force of cavalry was seen about one o'clock in the afternoon advancing at a leisurely pace, and, with much apparent caution, moved on Cacabelos. Through the middle of the town there runs a small stream, along the bank of which part of the reserve was drawn up, whilst the 95th Rifle Corps, supported by a picket of Hussars, occupied a rising ground about half a league in advance. The Riflemen were commanded to fall back, and retreat through the town over a bridge, and the greater number had already effected

this movement, when the French cavalry, coming on in overwhelming numbers, our pickets were forced to give way, and the French, getting in amongst the two rear companies of the 95th, succeeded in making some prisoners. The Riflemen had hardly recovered their surprise, and were barely able to extend in skirmishing order, when a cloud of dismounted chasseurs dashed forward, and, crossing the stream in every part, commenced a sharp onset upon the village. They were met with great gallantry by the 95th, who, retiring slowly up the hill in rear of the town, took post among some vineyards, and galled them from that shelter. From these the cavalry attempted to dislodge them. They charged boldly up the road, and threatened to take the skirmishers in rear, but they were driven back by the steady and well-directed fire of the 95th, leaving General Colbert, with many other officers and men, dead upon the field. Colbert was such an excellent officer, and so brave, that the 95th showed their admiration of his character and their grief at his death by an expression of loud regret. He fell pierced by a rifle-ball, which entered his temple.

The struggle was sharp and fairly long, the Riflemen valiantly holding their position for more than an hour. They, with the rest, were ultimately compelled to retire, as the unequal fight could not be maintained. But not all the

green jackets got away—19 lay dead upon the ground, some in the vineyards in which hard struggles had taken place, and 48 were prisoners. A total casualty list of 67 in that small affair gives Cacabelos a claim to strong remembrance in the annals of the regiment.

It was in this contest that Private Tom Plunkett achieved rare distinction for himself and the 95th. Plunkett was a first-rate shot, and, judging by what he did with the imperfect weapon at his command, he would, with a Lee-Metford, have stood a fair chance to secure the blue ribbon at a meeting like Bisley. From the vineyards in which they were posted the Rifles fired so destructively that the enemy were driven back. Their leader, however, General Colbert, rallied them, and, re-invigorated by his example, they prepared to hurl themselves afresh against the men of the 95th. At this crisis Plunkett jumped over a bank into the road, and threw himself upon his back in the snow. With the sling of his rifle caught over his foot to steady the weapon, he aimed steadily, and shot the French general dead, the

distance between the two being very short. The orderly trumpeter of the fallen officer, seeing what had happened, rode upon the Rifleman, but before he could reach him Plunkett had fired again, and the man shared the fate of his superior. Having done this, Plunkett hurried back to his comrades.

On reaching England at the close of the disastrous but honourable first campaign in the Peninsula, the 95th were quartered at Hythe, where the thinned ranks were filled up for the most part by volunteers from the Militia. The Rifles then, as nowadays, attracted many good-class recruits—at one time early in the century four ex-officers were serving in the regiment—and so rapidly were the vacant places filled that a third battalion was raised. This was in 1809. Major M'Leod, from the 1st Battalion, was appointed lieutenant-colonel.

CHAPTER IV

BUSACO TO SALAMANCA

Not half a year had passed before the 95th were back in the Peninsula, the 1st Battalion reaching Portugal in June, while the 2nd went with the other British troops to court disaster at Walcheren. The 1st rejoined its brave comrades, the 43rd and 52nd, forming once more that marvellous light brigade which Craufurd led so frequently to victory.

“Busaco,” “Barrosa,” and “Fuentes d’Onor” are honours which represent the work of the 95th in the next general actions in which they shared. Wellington, wishful to strike a blow to support the spirits of his people, who were depressed by the disasters which it had not been possible to avert, halted his army of 50,000 men on the top of the ridge of Busaco. There

he waited for the French, commanded by Marshal Massena, and numbering 72,000. At daybreak on September 27, 1810, the French, in overwhelming force, assailed the British position ; but on every hand they were repulsed with heavy loss, the Portuguese, who formed part of Wellington's force, acquitting themselves bravely. The French were compelled to withdraw, leaving a general and 1800 officers and men killed and 3000 wounded, and several hundreds of soldiers as prisoners. The loss amongst Wellington's forces was about 1300. From Busaco the allies had to retreat to the historic lines of Torres-Vedras, a series of amazing entrenchments of whose existence Massena had never heard. They consisted of three distinct lines of defence, one within the other. The first extended 25 miles, from Alhandra, on the Tagus, to the sea, and was fortified by 30 redoubts and 140 guns ; the second, 8 miles in the rear, was even stronger, and in all not less than 600 pieces of artillery were mounted on 150 redoubts. For more than a month the Marshal watched this gigantic barrier, hoping at least to starve the

defenders out ; but he failed, for the holders of the lines were well supplied by sea. Meanwhile 15,000 Portuguese militia harassed the rear of the French, captured 5000 of their sick and wounded, and cut off their communications. Having to choose between starving and retreating, Massena, on November 14, began to withdraw his forces, and instantly he was pursued by Wellington with 60,000 men.

This was the retreat of which Wellington said that for systematic and deliberate barbarity it had been seldom equalled, and never surpassed. The path of the flying French was marked by the ruins of towns, villages, and convents which had been burnt, while those which escaped the flames were reduced to a state of dilapidation. Peasants were massacred everywhere, and murder and outrage were committed upon a people whose country the retreating force had failed to conquer.

The 95th as a regiment just missed the battle of Talavera, in July 1809, and does not bear that historic fight as an honour. But the Rifle Brigade has good reason to be proud of what it did in connection with the engagement. With the

43rd and the 52nd the 95th joined the victors on the morning following the battle, having made desperate efforts to get up in time for the fighting. If the 95th did not share in the engagement it took part at any rate in one of the most famous marches on record. Napier tells how the three regiments, after a march of 20 miles, were bivouacked for the night, when intelligence reached their commanding officer that Wellington was on the eve of a battle. After a short halt the troops got under arms, with a fixed determination to share the glory of the coming field. As they advanced Spanish fugitives, hurrying off in crowds, informed them that the struggle was already ended, that the English army was totally defeated, and Wellington killed. "Indignant at this shameful scene," adds Napier, "the troops hastened, rather than slackened, the impetuosity of their pace, and, leaving only seventeen stragglers behind, in twenty-six hours they accomplished a march of 62 English miles. To estimate this extraordinary effort made by these splendid regiments, it should be recollected that it was

executed in heavy marching order, over a country where water was scarce, and beneath a burning sun. As a march, none on military record has exceeded it." A comparison of a great number of marches which had been made up to that time showed that an army of 40,000 men required about eight hours to traverse, in ordinary weather, a distance of 15 miles, which might be called an average military day's march. The average to-day remains unchanged. According to the calculations of Major-General Clery, an army corps can seldom move more than 12 to 15 miles, although smaller bodies, such as battalions or brigades, can, in ordinary circumstances, get over 20.

But the 95th were not unrepresented at Talavera, for some members of the 1st and 2nd Battalions, about 175 in all, who had remained in Portugal after the campaign of 1808, took part in the battle, having shared in the passage of the Douro. In 1849, forty years after the battle of Talavera, there were still living 10 survivors of the 175, and these received the Talavera clasp.

Wellington was not at any time lavish in his praise. In days when hard and dangerous work was as surely expected as the coming of the dawn, it was impossible for him to take notice of all the brave things that were done by troops under his command ; but there were frequent occasions when he found it necessary to break through his reserve, and give credit where it was particularly due. Many were the occasions on which he had to single out the 95th, and one of the most memorable in the history of the regiment was in connection with an affair of posts in 1810.

One stormy night in March of that year a company of Rifles, with two companies in immediate reserve, held the most advanced post of the Light Division at the Bridge of Barba del Puerco, on the Agueda River. It was in weather such as this that each side, during the Peninsular campaign, often tried to take advantage of the other. On this wild night 600 grenadiers of France, all picked men, made a desperate attempt to rush the post and take it. They came up in the darkness and furiously attacked the Rifles,

but, outnumbered though they were, the men of the 95th held their ground with such undaunted courage and so tenaciously that the assailants were driven back, broken and defeated.

Wellington showed his appreciation of the valour of the defence by issuing a special complimentary Order, in which he said :—“ The action reflects great honour on the regiment, inasmuch as it was of the sort that riflemen of other armies would shun. In other armies the rifle is considered as ill calculated for close action with an enemy armed with musket and bayonet, but the 95th Regiment have proved that the rifle in the hands of a British soldier is a fully efficient weapon to enable him to defeat the French in the closest fight.”

In the combat at the river Coa, in Portugal, on July 24, 1810, the 95th had 1 officer and 11 rank and file killed, 8 officers and 1 sergeant and 54 rank and file wounded, and 1 officer, 1 sergeant, and 52 rank and file missing. Of the wounded, 3 officers died within a day or two, and many of the rank and file succumbed on the way to Lisbon. O'Hare's

company suffered terribly—so terribly that next morning it mustered only 11 men on parade. The losses were sustained mostly in a cavalry charge by the enemy—a charge in which a Rifleman named Charity was shot through the arm by a musket ball, and received a sabre cut on the head and another on the body, yet lived to become a pensioner at Chelsea, where he died many years after the fight.

Barrosa was fought on March 5, 1811, and proved one of the greatest triumphs of the Peninsula. The British were under Major-General Sir Thomas Graham, and the French under Marshal Victor. The battle was fought with the most determined fury on both sides, but in the end the French were forced to retreat, leaving 2000 killed and wounded, 300 prisoners, 6 guns, and an eagle, this being the first of these famous trophies to be captured by the British in action. Graham's loss was 1169 in killed and wounded. In this engagement part of the 2nd Battalion of the 95th, under Lieutenant-Colonel Norcott, and the 3rd Battalion, under Colonel Barnard, were

present, and suffered a total loss of 101 officers and men killed and wounded.

Of this action Wellington wrote that it was the hardest which had been fought up to that time in the Peninsula, and Quartermaster Surtees put on record that in all his fighting he was never in an action in which the chances of death were so numerous. "And I may say," he added piously, "I never was in an action where I was less prepared to die. It is, therefore, of the Lord's mercies that He spared me—I hope for good at last." Never was victory more complete. In less than three hours from the first glimpse they had of the French as the British debouched from the wood, not a Frenchman was to be seen in all the field, save the killed and wounded.

At Fuentes d'Onor, on May 4, Wellington and Massena met in a long and desperate fight. It was with the Marshal, who daily expected to be superseded, a case of making a last stand. He had 5000 cavalry, 40,000 infantry, and 30 guns, while Wellington could muster only 32,000, of whom not more than 1200 were

cavalry. The British were drawn up on the level summit of a plateau, between two deep ravines, only to be reached by a narrow neck of land on their right. The French attack was directed against this point, and so tremendous was it that the British were driven back. Four thousand cuirassiers, fresh from the colossal triumph of Wagram, were hurled against, and broke, Wellington's right wing, and there came that hour than which Napier said there was not in all the war a more dangerous one for England. But the British proved invincibly steady, and when night fell the enemy drew off, neither side having gained a decided advantage. This battle, however, freed Portugal from the French. The British loss was nearly 1600; that of the French amounted to 3000—400 dead were left in the village of Fuentes d'Onor alone; while many prisoners were taken. The loss of the 95th at Fuentes d'Onor was 1 officer killed and 3 of other ranks killed and 13 wounded. The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Battalions were represented in the engagement.

The year 1812 gave to the regiment the

honours of Ciudad Rodrigo—January 19 ; Badajos—April 6 ; and Salamanca—July 22. In each of these engagements the regiment fought hard and well, and in the first it had to bid farewell to the man under whom it had been led to so many glorious victories, and who, though not of the 95th, had been so long associated with it as to seem one of them—General Craufurd. Inspiring his men with the word, “Now, lads, for the breach,” he was mortally wounded, and died in a few days.

Sir William Cope has told two anecdotes illustrative of Craufurd’s special connection with the 95th. One of these may be given briefly. Once in the Peninsula, Corporal Miles, of the regiment, was, with a comrade, court-martialed for stealing bread from the house of a Spanish woman. The offenders were ordered to receive 150 lashes each. Miles having been tied up to a tree, Craufurd turned to the regiment and said sternly, “You think that because you are Riflemen, and more exposed to the enemy’s fire than other troops, you may rob the inhabitants with impunity ; but while I command you, you

shall not." He ordered the corporal to strip, whereupon the culprit begged forgiveness. The General refused, saying, "No, your crime is too great." Not till then did the corporal remind the General that, at Buenos Ayres, they were made prisoners together; that Craufurd sat upon his knapsack while he drew water for him in his mess-tin, and that he shared his last biscuit with him. "You then told me," added Miles, "that you'd never forget my kindness to you. It's now in your power, sir. You know how short we've been of rations for some time, sir."

The General and every one who heard the appeal were deeply moved; but the bugle-major had nodded, and the corporal had received the first lash, when Craufurd cried, "What's that? Who taught that bugler to flog? Send him to drill. He can't flog. Stop! stop! Take him down! I remember it well—I remember it well!" He paced up and down, greatly affected, and in perfect silence the corporal was released. At last Craufurd said, "Why does a brave soldier like you commit these crimes?" Then,

calling his orderly, he mounted his horse, and without uttering another word rode off. The corporal's fellow-prisoner was pardoned also, and Miles in the course of a few days had restored to him the corporal's stripes of which he had been deprived.

At Ciudad Rodrigo the regiment's loss was 1 officer and 9 of other ranks killed, and 5 officers and 47 of other ranks wounded—a total of 62. A melancholy incident of the capture of Rodrigo was the taking of 7 men of the Light Division who had deserted to the enemy, pleading that they had been driven to desert through want of food and clothing. Surtees, however, says there was no actual want, and that these men acted in the “most diabolical manner,” crying, when the breaches were stormed, “Now, here comes the Light Division, let's give it 'em, the ——”; and so had wrought more mischief to the assailing party than twice their number of French. The men were sentenced to death, and shot by firing parties from each regiment in the presence of the Division, which was formed into three sides of a square, the cul-

prits kneeling on the vacant side, in front of the graves which had been dug to receive them.

Badajos was one of the most desperate and bloody fights in which the regiment has ever shared. Its loss there was a total of 305, of whom 9 officers and 57 men were killed, and 14 officers and 225 men wounded. All three battalions shared in the assault, and the regiment helped to swell that forlorn hope which proved itself invincible. On that day were done many deeds of valour, of which no record has been kept; but many also were performed which have been put into military history for all time. It was here that the brave O'Hare fell, shot through the breast by two or three musket balls; his sergeant, Fleming, who had been his comrade on many a field of battle, falling at his side. "Who," wrote Napier, "shall measure out the glory of . . . O'Hare, of the 95th, who perished on the breach at the head of the stormers, and with him nearly all the volunteers for that desperate service? Who shall describe the martial fury of that desperate soldier of the 95th who, in his resolution

to win, thrust himself beneath the chained sword-blades, and there suffered the enemy to dash his head to pieces with the ends of their muskets?"

Like so many soldiers who have died in battle, O'Hare had a foreboding of death. When the stormers were gathering he observed that he thought that night would be his last, and, shaking hands with a comrade as the party moved off, he said, "A lieutenant-colonel or *cold meat* in a few hours." When this valiant soldier was found next morning, his dead body had been stripped by those marauders who, during the war, did their work so well and swiftly that an eye-witness has told how it was almost impossible to believe that these despicable robbers should be so deft. In a "Sketch of the Storming of Badajos," a writer in the *United Service Journal*, 1829, said, "*One man only* was at the top of the left breach (the heaps of dead had, as a matter of course, rolled to the bottom), and that was one of the 95th (Rifle Corps), who had succeeded in getting his head under the *chevaux-de-frise*, which was battered to pieces, and his arms

and shoulders torn asunder with bayonet wounds."

After the victory came those excesses, that mad indulgence in drink and outrage, which have made Badajos an almost infamous remembrance. So long as the enemy was to be met and fought, so long did the British troops remain obedient to that discipline which had covered them with glory ; but when the restraint had been removed the victors broke into the most ungovernable intemperance. Some of the now lawless soldiers were only beaten into obedience, so that they might get away the worst of the wounded, those maimed survivors who were pleading in God's name to be removed to hospital. In some cases exquisite torture was inflicted on the wounded by "the half-drunken brutes"—the words are those of Surtees—who were employed to carry them. "The drunken scoundrels" who had been pressed into the service seldom made more than one or two of these trips ; then they deserted.

Cary, a lieutenant of the 95th, a friend and messmate for whom Surtees was searching, was

found by him beneath one of the ladders by which the assailants had descended into the ditch. Except for a flannel waistcoat which he wore next his skin he was completely naked. He had been shot through the head, and still breathed when he was placed on a shutter by a sergeant and some men whom Surtees and another officer had pressed for the service ; but these soldiers were so drunk that they let Cary fall from their shoulders to the ground, which he struck with great force. The sufferer, however, was past all feeling, and very soon died. He was buried on the following day behind the tents of the 95th, one of the officers reading the funeral service.

Strange were some of the scenes which Surtees saw in Badajos—none stranger than that “frail, fair one,” leaning on the arm of an officer, carrying in her disengaged hand a bird in a cage, and tripping over the bodies of the dead and dying with all the ease and indifference of a person moving in a ball-room. Striking, too, was the picture of that soldier of the 1st Battalion 95th who sat astride a hogshead of

brandy in the streets, and, filling his mess-tin from the cask, swore that every person who went past should drink, no matter who he might be. He even forced his commanding officer to take the tin and drink—for he had his loaded rifle alongside, and was, like the rest of the soldiers, utterly beyond control. No house, no church, no convent, was held sacred ; but priests, nuns, and common people shared alike, those who showed the least resistance being put to death on the spot. With spectacles such as these before him, and compelled to witness camps which, for several days after the battle, were “ more like rag-fairs than military encampments,” one can believe that Surtees “ was fairly tired of life, so disgusting and sickening ” were the things he saw.

It would be useless to pretend that some of the men of the 95th were better at this exact time than their fellows of the Army. After the assault, it is true, the 1st Battalion were kept together on the ramparts by Cameron, their commanding officer, but only for the time being, and by fear. He told them that when all

danger from the enemy was over he would let them fall out, but that if a man left the ranks until then he would have him put to death on the spot. They held together until between nine and ten o'clock in the morning, when the officer told them they could go and amuse themselves ; but that he would expect them all to be in camp at tattoo. It was two days, however, before the absentees returned and order was restored. But at the same time it must not be forgotten that on the whole the conduct of the 95th throughout the war — that is, its moral behaviour—was such as to single it out for special praise, and to make it needless to resort, except on very rare occasions, to the degrading punishment of flogging. It is said of the 95th that not more than half-a-dozen men received corporal punishment during the six years the regiment was in the Peninsula.

A striking example is given of the 95th's efficiency in this respect. A man of the 1st Battalion had robbed his comrades and deserted. Being captured, he was ordered to undergo 150 lashes, but Colonel Cameron, then at the head

of the battalion, said he would pardon the offender if the battalion would be answerable for his good behaviour. The corps must have known its man, for it was not until a big share of the punishment had been inflicted, and after several chances had been given to the soldiers to speak, that a man stepped out of the ranks and begged the Colonel to forgive him. The interceder was as bad as the prisoner, but Cameron let the culprit go. "Your bravery in the field, men," he said, "is known to me and to the army. Your moral worth I now know. I am glad that not a man of the battalion would come forward for that prisoner except one ; and what he is you know as well as I do."

At Salamanca the regiment was prevented from taking a prominent part in the victory which Wellington gained by the fact that the only duty they were called upon to do for most of the day was to keep the French right in check ; but towards evening they joined in the pursuit of the broken foe. The losses of the regiment—1st and 2nd Battalions—were very slight.

CHAPTER V

VITTORIA TO WATERLOO

THE year 1813 gave the regiment the honours of "Vittoria," "Nivelle," and "Nive." The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Battalions were present at Vittoria, where the losses were 1 officer and 11 of other ranks killed, and 6 and 61 wounded respectively, or a total of 79. In a slight affair before that battle a French hussar chased an officer of the 3rd Battalion round a tree. The horseman struck at the officer repeatedly, and would beyond question have cut him down had not the fugitive seized the rifle of a dead man. Luckily it was loaded, and he shot the hussar, whose attentions had become much too pressing to be pleasant. Almost as singular was the escape of an officer of the 1st Battalion not long afterwards. The enemy rushed at him,

and in trying to avoid them he fell into a bush. The enemy seized his sword, which was not drawn, to drag him out ; but the weapon broke away from the belt, and the officer escaped.

A double distinction fell to the Rifles in connection with Vittoria. They captured the first three of the French guns which fell into the hands of the British, and in the pursuit at the close of the battle they took the last of the 150 guns which remained with the victors as part of the spoils of their triumph.

Of the guns captured by the 95th one was seized in the most daring fashion by Lieutenant FitzMaurice, of the 1st Battalion. The Rifles, having cleared the village of Arinez, FitzMaurice saw that a French battery was hurriedly retiring. Burning with a wish to intercept it, the lieutenant dashed off in pursuit, his men following. But the soldiers were in heavy marching order, and could not keep up with their more lightly equipped superior officer, so that when he reached the road by which the battery was retiring only two of his men were with him. By this time five of the guns had

torn past, but the lieutenant, undaunted by the odds against him, sprang at the lead horses of the sixth gun, and caught one of them by the head. Instantly the driver fired a pistol at him, the ball going through the officer's cap. There seemed a strong likelihood of the officer losing his life and the gun escaping when one of the Riflemen shot a centre horse, and so brought the team to a standstill. By this time other men of the company had hurried up, and they seized the gun and made prisoners of the gunners and the drivers. This was one of the most notable incidents of a battle which abounded in acts of personal valour.

St. Sebastian was stormed on August 31, 1813, 50 men under a subaltern of each of the three battalions being allowed to volunteer for the task. After five hours' fierce fighting the place was taken, at a total cost, so far as is known, of 2 officers wounded and 8 non-commissioned officers and men killed and 16 wounded. "This storm," wrote Napier, "seemed to be the signal of hell for the perpetration of villainy which would have shamed

the most ferocious barbarians of antiquity. At Ciudad Rodrigo intoxication and plunder had been the principal object ; at Badajos lust and murder were joined to rapine and drunkenness ; but at San Sebastian, the direst, the most revolting cruelty was added to the catalogue of crime. One atrocity, of which a girl of seventeen was the victim, staggers the mind by its enormous, incredible, indescribable barbarity."

Very interesting it is to note what Sir W. Cope believed to be the first regimental dinner of the Rifles. This was given a few days before the storming of St. Sebastian, when the three battalions happened to be together, and it was resolved to commemorate the anniversary of the formation of the regiment. A trench was dug round a parallelogram of greensward, which served for the table. The feasters sat on the opposite bank, with their legs in the trench. Patriotic toasts were honoured with loud enthusiasm, and healths were drunk with deep heartiness. Afterwards, as an immediate attack was expected from the French, the diners stood to arms for some part of the night.

On the same day as St. Sebastian there was the unfortunate occurrence known as the affair of the Bridge of Vera, in which the three battalions suffered. The 95th, with a few other troops, were resisting the French attempt to cross the Bidassoa, the French having been seen after a thick morning mist had dispersed. A terrific thunderstorm made the river swiftly rise, and it became necessary to evacuate the position which the British had taken up. This the officer commanding neglected to do, and held the post until the following morning. At two o'clock the French, who had come on in silence, rushed the bridge, then held by about 100 men of the 95th, and so badly placed were the defenders that their total loss was 77—1 officer and 18 non-commissioned officers and men being killed. Every officer present was either killed or wounded. The Riflemen, however, made the enemy suffer heavily, for when daylight came it was seen that the bridge was strewn with the bodies of the French, and the river had many more. This was irrespective of the wounded who had been removed.

In little more than a month the 95th had their revenge for this affair by forcing the pass at Vera and securing the position in very brilliant fashion. This was on October 7, when the 2nd Battalion suffered a loss of nearly one-third of its strength. Three officers, 4 sergeants, and 23 rank and file were killed; 5 officers, 6 sergeants, and 128 rank and file wounded, and 1 Rifleman missing—a total of 170. The 1st Battalion had 10 Riflemen wounded, and the 3rd had 4 killed, and 1 officer and 17 men wounded, making a total for the three battalions of 202.

The fighting in the Pyrenees was of the hardest and most trying nature. At one period of the operations the Rifles, like the rest of the troops engaged, had been for two days without any sustenance, and were so weak that they could scarcely stand, but an excellent commissary had managed to overtake them, and half-a-pound of biscuit was hastily served out to each individual. This scant food the soldiers devoured while loading and priming as they moved to the attack. While clambering up the

mountain of St. Bernard, says one who shared in the battles of the Pyrenees (*United Service Journal*, 1830), the summit was wrapped in a dense fog, and an invisible firing began. The combatants were literally contending in the clouds, and it was impossible to see which side was getting the better. "When half-way up the side of the mountain, we found a man of the Rifles lying on his face, and bleeding so copiously that his haversack was dyed in blood. We turned him over, and being somewhat recovered before he was carried off, he told us, in broken monosyllables, that three Frenchmen had mistaken him for a Portuguese, laid hold of him, thrust a bayonet through his thigh, smashed the stock of his rifle, and then pushed him from off the ledge of the precipice under which we discovered him." On the previous day this writer, whose regiment was supporting the 95th, saw Captain Perceval of the Rifles, who had been wounded. "Well," said Perceval, "I am a lucky fellow, with one arm maimed and useless by my side from an old wound, and now unable to use the other."

“After a series of difficult marches, amongst a chaotic jumble of sterile mountains, the enemy were totally discomfited, with an enormous loss, by a series of the most extraordinary and brilliant efforts during the Peninsular War.” In that telling sentence this writer sums up the fights in the Pyrenees—and yet the honour for the battles has never been granted to the Rifle Brigade!

Nivelle—November 9, 1813—cost the 95th 1 officer killed and 10 wounded; and 11 non-commissioned officers and men killed and 76 wounded—a total of 98. Of the three battalions of the 95th engaged, the 1st suffered the most severely, the 2nd not so heavily, and the 3rd still less.

Orthez, though borne as an honour, was a battle in which the 95th was not actively engaged. At Tarbes, however, fought about three weeks later—March 20, 1814—the three battalions lost heavily in what proved to be one of the most stubborn fights of the campaign, 93 officers and men being killed and wounded. This was an affair which was

peculiarly the 95th's, inasmuch as not a shot was fired on the hill where the fight took place by any British troops except these, although other regiments were in reserve. "The French fought stoutly," says Alison, "and, mistaking the British Rifle battalions, from their dark uniform, for Portuguese, let them come up to the very muzzles of their guns. But the Rifles were hardy veterans, inured to victory; and at length Harispe's men, unable to stand their deadly point-blank fire, broke and fled." Tarbes has been always looked upon as *the* regimental fight of the Brigade.

Toulouse—April 18, 1814—claimed more than 40 of the regiment in killed and wounded; and so the 95th crowned its six years' work in the Peninsula.

Of the friendly relations existing between the British and French forces during the cessation of hostilities, owing to bad weather or other causes, many instances have been put on record; in fact to such a pitch did the friendly intercourse go that Wellington found it necessary specially to order that

these civilities should cease, and that the troops under his command should attend solely to their business of soldiering. At the time of the passage of the Adour—1814—Surtees says that a disposition had for some time been gaining ground, with both armies, to mitigate the miseries of warfare as much as they could, consistent with their devotion to their countries. At that time the disposition had grown to such an extent as to allow the 95th and other troops to put so much confidence in the foe that the French would not molest them, even if they passed their outposts. Before Wellington's order was issued the most unbounded confidence subsisted between the two forces, "which it was a pity to put a stop to, except for such weighty reasons. They used to get us such things as we wanted from Bayonne, particularly brandy, which was cheap and plentiful; and we in return gave them occasionally a little tea, of which some of them had learned to be fond. Some of them, also, who had been prisoners of war in England, sent letters through our army post to their

sweethearts in England, our people receiving the letters and forwarding them.

“The next day, there being no firing between us and those in our front, three French officers, seeming anxious to prove how far politeness and good breeding could be carried between the two nations when war did not compel them to be unfriendly, took a table and some chairs out of a house which was immediately in our front, and one which we had lately occupied as a barrack, and, bringing them down into the middle of the field which separated the advance of the two armies, sat down within a hundred yards of our picket, and drank wine, holding up their glasses, as much as to say, ‘Your health,’ every time they drank. Of course we did not molest them, but allowed them to have their frolic out.”

During this day, also, Surtees saw soldiers of the three nations—English, Portuguese, and French—all plundering at the same time in one unfortunate house which stood about two hundred yards below the church, on a sort of neutral ground between the two armies.

This dwelling contained such desirable luxuries as wine, a pie, and a pig. No wonder that the house was the assembling place of a band of keen, motley marauders. "They plundered in perfect harmony," says Surtees, "no one disturbing the other on account of his nation or colour."

Quatre Bras—June 16, 1815—and Waterloo, three days later, were fights in which the Riflemen suffered very severely. At Quatre Bras the 1st Battalion lost 1 officer and 2 sergeants and 6 rank and file killed; 4 officers, 3 sergeants, and 48 rank and file wounded—a total of 64. At Waterloo the total loss of the corps was 2 officers killed and 32 wounded, and 57 non-commissioned officers and men killed, and 339 wounded—in all 430, by far the heaviest loss suffered by the regiment in any single action.

There is little doubt that the 95th were the first troops to open fire at Quatre Bras. In his *Adventures of a Soldier*, Edward Costelloe, at one time a non-commissioned officer in the Rifle Brigade, and afterwards an officer in the British Legion, says he could see the enemy

emerging from a wood about a mile on their right. The wood was on rising ground, with a plain between the two forces. Scarcely had the 95th seized the wood when Costelloe saw a French cuirassier on vedette. He was fired at by our men, and his horse was shot under him. The cuirassier disengaged himself as the horse was falling, waving his sword in defiance; but the gallant fellow was instantly dropped by another Rifleman. "I can venture to assert," says Costelloe, "that our company was the first of the British Army who pulled a trigger at this celebrated battle." This claim is supported by Captain Siborne, who in his history says that the skirmishers who successfully checked the further advance of the French, and secured the wood, were the 1st Battalion of the 95th Rifles, whom the campaigners of the French Army, at least those who had served in the Peninsula, had so frequently found the foremost in the fight, and of whose peculiarly effective discipline and admirable training they had had ample experience.

The irrepressible Kincaid was adjutant of

the 1st Battalion at Waterloo, and he was at that time a veteran fighter enough to be able to take a cool survey of the wonderful and impressive spectacle before him. The 1st Battalion was on the left centre of the British position, its right resting on the Namur Road, in rear of La Haye Sainte, its left extending behind a hedge running along the ridge to the left. Immediately in front, and divided from La Haye Sainte only by a road, was a small knoll with a sand-pit on its farther side, which was occupied by three companies. The battalion had not been long in position when the French guns opened fire, and their columns began to advance. This scene, says Kincaid, who, with his comrades, had a few minutes to spare for observation, was grand and imposing. "The column destined as *our* particular *friends* first attracted our notice, and seemed to consist of about 10,000 infantry." They saw Napoleon himself take post on the side of the road, immediately on their front, each regiment as it passed rending the air with shouts of "*Vive l'Empereur !*"

This vociferous cheering was in strong contrast with the stern silence which reigned on the side of the British. But the Rifles had not much time to spend in contemplation. In a few moments they were called upon to do their duty, and they did it well. They opened a fire on the advancing skirmishers which quickly brought them to a standstill. But the French columns advanced steadily through them, and the Rifles' post was quickly turned on both flanks, compelling Kincaid's people to fall back and join their comrades behind the hedge, though not before some of the officers of the 95th and the French had been engaged in personal combat. When the heads of the French column showed over the knoll which the 95th had just quitted, they received such a heavy fire that they wavered ; but, cheered and encouraged by the valour of their officers, they at last advanced to the opposite side of the hedge and began to deploy. The first line, in the meantime, was getting so thinned, that Picton found it necessary to bring up his second, but fell in the act of doing so. With the exception of a

short respite between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, the battalion was heavily engaged throughout the day.

The companies of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 95th were at first posted between the village of Merve-Braine and the road to Nivelles; but after the battle began they formed up in quarter-column on a plateau overlooking the Nivelles road. Afterwards they moved more forward, and drew up close to the road. The companies, when Hougoumont was attacked, hurled themselves against a body of French skirmishers and drove them back, and then they halted in a hollow which extended from the ridge towards the south-east to Hougoumont. At this spot they were charged by the Carabineers and Grenadiers-à-Cheval of the Imperial Guard, and the 2nd Battalion suffered heavily from artillery fire in the intervals between these charges.

In one of these charges Captain Eeles formed his company of the 3rd Battalion in line with the rear face of the square of the 71st, and ordered his men not to fire till he gave the

word. Then, allowing the Carabineers to approach within thirty or forty yards of the angle of the front to which they were charging, he gave them such a volley as, combined with the volley of the square, brought half of them to the ground.

Later in the day, when Napoleon began to see that all was lost, the 2nd Battalion shared in that famous charge which shattered even the magnificent Old Guard. That body, composed of the finest troops of France, and fondly regarded as invincible, was broken and put to rout. Siborne says of this charge that it was remarkable for the order, the steadiness, the resoluteness, and the daring by which it was characterised. How nobly the 95th bore themselves in this most celebrated of modern battles is shown by the total losses which the regiment suffered.

Subsequently the 95th formed part of the Army of Occupation, and remained in France until the autumn of 1818. But before it left the soil on which it had fought so hard and so greatly distinguished itself, the corps had been

taken out of the Line and made into an independent body, to be known in future as the Rifle Brigade. This was done in recognition of the brilliant services of the 95th, the Order authorising the change being dated February 16, 1816.

The 3rd Battalion was reduced in the latter part of the year 1818. Some of the men were drafted into the 1st and 2nd Battalions, the rest being discharged.

At this period changes were made in the uniform, a high bell-topped shako taking the place of the Belgic cap. The officers still wore the "slung jacket," *à la Hussarde*, which had been worn all through the Peninsula. To this period also belongs the introduction of the present helmet-ornament which, alike in cross and crown, appears to have been suggested by the then newly-designed badge of the Hanoverian Guelphic Order. This striking uniform was, with a few slight alterations, worn until just before the time of the Crimean War.

Whatever the pillaging proclivities of the British soldier may have been in the Peninsula,

they did not reach the high development of the Frenchman's. The French soldiers had been accustomed to plunder for so many years that they had carried their search to the limit of a fine art. If valuables of any sort were to be found the French would discover them. They were actually provided with special tools so that they might pillage to the best advantage, and they developed a sort of instinct for ascertaining where treasure was hidden or buried. "The habit of living by prey called forth," said Southey, "as in beasts, a faculty of discovering it. There was one soldier whose senses became so acute, that if he approached the place where wine had been concealed, he would go unerringly to the spot. Wherever the French bivouacked the scene was such as might rather have been looked for in a camp of predatory Tartars than in that of a civilised people. Food and forage, and skins of wine, and clothes and church vestments, books and guitars, and all the bulkier articles of wasteful spoil, were heaped together in their huts with the planks and doors of the habitations which they had

demolished. Some of the men, retaining amid this brutal service the characteristic activity and cleverness of their nation, fitted up their huts with hangings from their last scene of pillage, with a regard to comfort hardly to be expected in their situation, and a love of gaiety only to be found in Frenchmen. The idlers were contented with a tub, and, if the tub were large enough, three or four would stow themselves into it!"

It is necessary to make a brief retrospect in order to get a glimpse of some operations in which the 3rd Battalion was engaged in another part of the world.

Only two months elapsed from the arrival of the 3rd Battalion in England from the Peninsula when five companies re-embarked for service. This was on September 14, 1814. That service was kept a profound secret, but eventually the expedition knew that its object was to be a descent near New Orleans on the American coast. The force consisted of four Line regiments and two West India regiments. The descent was not a success. The Americans

were prepared, and the invaders were repulsed from before the strongly-fortified lines with heavy loss. Very great difficulties had to be overcome by the invaders. The 95th, fresh from long and desperate service in the Peninsula, did its best, like the rest of the troops, to secure victory, but the undertaking was totally beyond their powers.

The expedition, however, added to the renown of the 95th, and is worthy of remembrance, if only for that incident in the campaign which is known as the affair of Hallen's picket. It was the defence of a post by a picket of the 95th under Captain Hallen, and was characterised at the time as an affair of posts but rarely equalled, and never surpassed in devoted bravery. It occurred during the night, and in it the 95th lost one-fifth of the whole number of its members engaged. The total loss was 123—6 sergeants and 17 Riflemen killed; 3 officers, including Captain Hallen, and about 40 men wounded, and 1 officer, 2 sergeants and 39 Riflemen missing.

In this campaign the greatest efforts were

made by the Americans to induce men of the 95th to desert, but, to the everlasting credit of the regiment, not a single Rifleman of the 3rd Battalion proved unfaithful to his country.

CHAPTER VI

IN TIME OF PEACE

FROM the storm and stress of war it is relief to turn aside to refer to a few matters of detail, without touching upon which no history of the Rifle Brigade could claim completeness. Quartermaster Surtees has been mentioned as an admirable historian of the doings of the regiment in the early years of its existence. He was a pious, conscientious, somewhat sanctimonious scribe ; but his work rings true throughout.

Different indeed was the dashing Captain John Kincaid, who, in a volume which was trimly bound in a green jacket—prophetic forerunner of the khaki-clad military books of 1900—told of his adventures in the Rifle Brigade in the Peninsula, France, and the

Netherlands, from 1809 to 1815. It was aptly said of his production by a comrade-in-arms that its fire was as brisk, desultory, and effective as the buoyant corps it fitly represented, every sentence sounding as sharp and searching as the crack of a rifle.

Of an aide-de-camp who was captured by the 95th, with his wife, Kincaid wrote that he was a Portuguese and a traitor, and looked very like a man who would be hanged ; she was a Spaniard, dressed in a splendid hussar uniform, and very handsome, and looked very like a woman who would get married again.

Kincaid moralised in a style far different from that of Surtees. Having on one occasion taken possession of a church, he made a bed in the porch with some silk gowns and other priestly trappings. There, if all had been gold that glittered, he would have looked a jewel indeed. "But it is lamentable to think," he continued, "that, among the multifarious blessings we enjoy in this life, we should never be able to get a dish of glory and a dish of beefsteak on the same day." His moralising,

on that special occasion, was the result of having dined, on the three preceding days, "on the half of his inclinations."

Of an affair at Vera, on the Bidassoa, in which the three battalions of the 95th were engaged—they had left their kettles on the fire, in order to "eject" the enemy—Kincaid said that the regiment was let loose, under Colonel Barnard. They "handed the foe across the valley into their own position," and then retired to their own, where they found the tables ready spread, and a comfortable meal awaiting them. "This was one of the most gentleman-like days' fighting that I ever experienced, although we had to lament the vacant seats of one or two of our messmates."

Another historian of the 95th, whose journals and letters have been very recently published, under the editorship of Colonel Verner, was Major George Simmons. The letters are deeply interesting, showing, very clearly, what the officers and men of the 95th did and suffered early in the century. Simmons had something of the Surtees strain in him. "A soldier thinks

of nothing that has passed by," he wrote in one of his letters ; "it is only the present time that concerns him ; he is a careless and thoughtless being. I wish I could say he was a little more prepared for a speedy exit into a future state." Simmons began life in the medical profession, and got a commission in the 95th through a friendly militia colonel. He was himself a poor man, and his people in Yorkshire were in very straitened circumstances ; but in spite of all drawbacks he managed to support himself, and act as a protector and supporter of his family. More than that, he gave sage advice to his young brothers, who were infinitely more rash than he. One of these individuals, named Maud, Simmons "put upon an economical plan of paying for every article as he procures it, or go without it." This sad young dog had informed Simmons that he owed the regimental tailor £10 ; hence the sage advice. Maud was a curious name for a man ; but all the same it was borne in the case in question.

The principal historian of the Rifle Brigade,

Sir William Henry Cope, Bart., died at Southsea on January 9, 1892. His admirable and exhaustive volume, published in 1877, was the result of years of patient toil and investigation. Although a Rifle officer for only six years, he had a deep affection for his old regiment, and one of his hobbies was the collection of mementos of the corps.

The year following Waterloo was made noteworthy in the history of the Rifle Brigade by the terrible death in Dublin of Lieutenant Amphlett, one of the officers, in consequence of the bite of a mad dog belonging to another officer. This brute, a large, powerful Dutch poodle, was reported to have been taken from the side of his dead master, a French officer, who had been killed in battle. He was named Cartouche, and was with some members of the regiment a favourite. Dr. Ridgway, however, who subsequently narrated the affair in great detail, disliked the animal, and resented his intrusion on all occasions into the mess-room, from which all other dogs were ruthlessly excluded. The dog bit many people—in short,

it ran *amok* ; but Amphlett's was the only fatal case. It was stated that as many as fifteen soldiers had been bitten, but the actual number was three, who suffered in their efforts to secure the beast. The affair caused H.R.H. the Duke of York, then Commander-in-Chief, to send to the Adjutant-General in Ireland a recipe for the cure of hydrophobia, while ladies of Dublin went so far as to prepare remedies and leave them at the barracks. An Irish peasant from the interior of the country offered to visit Dublin instantly and cure all who had been bitten for a hundred guineas.

On December 7, 1820, the Duke of Wellington wrote to the Adjutant-General with respect to a letter from Colonel Norcott, commanding the 1st Battalion, saying that, according to the rule to which he had confined himself in recommending regiments for honorary distinctions, he conceived that the Rifle Brigade might be permitted to bear on its appointments the following inscriptions, in commemoration of the distinguished service of the battalions on those occasions—Roleia, Vimiera, Busaco, Bar-

rosa, Fuentes d'Onor, Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajos, Salamanca, Vittoria, Nivelles, Nive, Orthes, Toulouse. In compliance with this recommendation a Horse Guards order was issued, directing these victories to be borne on the appointments of the Rifle Brigade.

A few weeks later—March 1, 1821—the regiment was authorised to bear the honour of Corunna, in commemoration of its gallantry on January 16, 1809.

A third order, dated Horse Guards, March 22, 1821, authorised the additional honours "Copenhagen" and "Monte Video," in commemoration of the distinguished services of the corps in the action of April 2, 1801—its *first* service at Copenhagen—and of the three companies of the 2nd Battalion at Monte Video.

It will be seen that some of these honours were tardily given, but as a matter of fact the Rifle Brigade was more fortunate in this respect than other regiments, which have had to wait many years longer until honours dearly won were authorised, and then only after earnest and per-

sistent representations. Things are different indeed nowadays, when distinctions are awarded with the utmost promptitude. In the case of the Rifle Brigade, for instance, the honour of "Khartoum" was granted very soon after that campaign concluded, and was added to the already long roll of the regiment's distinctions published in the *Army List*.

From a Horse Guards circular, dated July 7, 1829, we get particulars as to the cost in those days of the Rifle officer's first equipment. This singular circular was issued for two reasons—First, to instruct young officers in the nature and exact amount of the equipment required of them; and, second, to awaken a competition among the tradesmen, and to afford each officer the opportunity of getting his appointments on the most reasonable terms. There was, however, another motive to which the circular delicately alluded. Young gentlemen, on joining, were fleeced as well as clothed by the tailors, and some of them had a way of keeping bashfully in the background when the decorative artist presented his bill. So far did

some of the tailors go that the General Commanding-in-Chief was frequently exposed to their repeated solicitations for payment, attentions which naturally enough Lord Hill did not regard as strictly part of his military duties. With a view of obviating these embarrassing requests inquiries were made of a number of tailors, and their ready-money prices for equipment obtained. Whether these lists induced military gentlemen to discharge their liabilities with greater promptness is not on record, but, at any rate, the lists were published, and very interesting they are. The cost of an officer's first equipment varied enormously. The 10th Hussars involved an expenditure of £399 : 7 : 6. This crack corps was an easy first, its outlay being far ahead of that of the next highest, the 15th Hussars, with £283 : 8 : 6. The Rifle regiments and the infantry of the Line had the same average, about £50.

This general average was made up as follows in the case of the Rifles :—

| | | | |
|---|-----|----|---|
| Pelisse | £12 | 8 | 0 |
| Jacket | 8 | 9 | 0 |
| Cloth braided trousers | 2 | 19 | 0 |
| Gambroon trousers for summer | 1 | 6 | 0 |
| Shako, plume, and tuft | 5 | 14 | 0 |
| Steel sword, knot, and scabbards | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| Pouch-belt, with bronze ornaments | 2 | 18 | 0 |
| Black waist-belt | 0 | 19 | 0 |
| Green frock coat | 4 | 19 | 0 |
| Forage cap and cover | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Sash | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Cloak (optional) | 5 | 10 | 0 |

£52 7 0

Since those days the cost of equipment has grown considerably. For actual uniforms—exclusive of boots, horse furniture, barrack kit, camp kit, etc.—an expenditure is involved by a Rifle officer of from £80 to £100.

In a Horse Guards order, dated January 22, 1862, it was intimated that the Queen, “desiring to perpetuate the remembrance of her beloved husband’s connection with the Rifle Brigade, and feeling sure that it will be gratifying to the corps to have the name of one who, as its Colonel-in-Chief, took

such a deep and constant interest in its welfare, has been pleased to command that it should in future bear the designation of 'The Prince Consort's Own Rifle Brigade.'" Subsequently this title was amended to the present form—The Rifle Brigade (The Prince Consort's Own).

Special notice must be taken of the famous regimental quick-step. It was composed at Malta in the early forties by Mr. William Miller, the bandmaster of the 1st Battalion of the Rifle Brigade. In a letter to Colonel Verner, Mr. Miller said : "In Malta, after becoming music master of the battalion, the first thing I did was to turn the old song, 'I'm 95,' into a march. In 1842 we had an amateur theatre. A man of the name of Goodall used to sing the song dressed as an old woman of 95 years. I soon brought it out on the band, and played it at Malta and Corfu. No one took notice of it more than any other march, but when we got to the Cape in 1846 there were long marches and sore feet, and I now made use of '95' to help the men into camp. The first day the battalion marched into it there was not a limp-

ing man amongst the lot, so I continued it during the first Cape War (1846-48). I did the same in the second Cape War (1851-53). During our stay at Fort Beaufort (1852) it became the regimental quick-march. The march before it was the 'Huntsmen's Chorus,' from the opera of *Der Freischütz*." It was at the close of the Crimean War that the march became world-famed. It was played before the Queen on her visit to Aldershot in 1856, and Her Majesty commanded Mr. Miller to send a copy of it to Windsor. "The 95th Regiment," he wrote, "took to the march after the Queen noticed it." Mr. Miller, it should be added, was associated with the band of the Rifle Brigade for the extraordinary period of more than half-a-century. His father was a Rifleman before him, and Mr. Miller became a green jacket when five years old. He did not leave the regiment until 1886, and then he was able to make the proud boast that for fifty-two years he served with the Rifle Brigade, and was "never away from the green jackets, at home or abroad."

The Baker rifle, with which the Rifle Corps was first armed, continued in use, with various trifling improvements which were made from time to time, until 1839, when the Brunswick rifle was issued. The Brunswick percussion rifle, with sword-bayonet and scabbard, had a total weight of 11 lb. 5½ oz. There were two grooves, making one turn in the length. The weight of the spherical belted bullet was 557 grains; that of the charge of powder was 2½ drachms. The weapon had a bore of .696.

In 1857 was issued the long Enfield rifle, with bayonet. The weight of the rifle and bayonet was 9 lb. 3 oz. The bore was .577, and there were three grooves, with one turn in 78 inches. Short Enfield rifles were issued a year later.

A weapon similar to the short Enfield was issued in 1861. This was known as the marine service rifle, and had a sword-bayonet.

In 1864 was issued the Whitworth rifle, a muzzle-loading weapon with either a hexagonal or cylindrical bullet; and in 1866 and 1867 the converted Snider breech-loader.

In 1873 the Martini-Henry breech-loading rifle was issued. This, with sword, weighed 8 lb. 12 oz.; length, 2 feet $9\frac{1}{8}$ inches. The weapon was sighted to 1400 yards, but had an extreme range of 3200 yards.

An amazing advance on any of these weapons was made with the issue of the Lee-Metford rifle, with which the regiment is now armed, and with which it has done so much good service in several campaigns. The Lee-Metford is a bolt-action, small-bore magazine rifle, sighted from 200 to 2900 yards. It has a bore of .303 of an inch, and carries a bullet 1.25 inch long, weighing 215 grains av., composed of lead and antimony, with an envelope of copper and nickel. The explosive is cordite, which, when fired, is smokeless. Ten rounds of ammunition weigh 10 oz. The rifle has a weight of 9 lb. 10 oz., and has a sword-bayonet a foot long. With a muzzle velocity of 2000 feet per second, there is little or no recoil. The rifle shoots with great accuracy, and at a distance of 500 yards the highest point of the trajectory covers with ease a man standing.

The rifle can be used as a single loader, and at the same time has a store of cartridges in the magazine, for use at such crises as a cavalry charge, in the last stages of attack or defence, or a sudden rush of savages. In its "stopping" properties, however, the rifle has not realised all the sanguine expectations that were held when the weapon was issued to the British Army, but it has proved a very great advance on any rifle with which the British soldier has been furnished in the past.

CHAPTER VII

THE CRIMEA AND THE MUTINY

FROM the time of Waterloo to the campaign in South Africa in 1846-47 the Rifle Brigade had the usual service at home and abroad. Amongst other things, it took part in suppressing riots in England and Ireland, and the 2nd Battalion attended the coronation of the Queen.

Of the disagreeable connection with the civil outbreaks, the most noteworthy feature was an affair at Tralee. On June 24, 1826, a company of the 2nd Battalion were called out in consequence of a riot and an attack on some peasantry. So serious did the disturbance become, that the Riflemen were ordered to fire, and the result was that five of the rioters were killed and thirteen were wounded, many of them dangerously. At an inquest held on two

of the persons killed, the jury expressed the opinion that the order to fire was unjustifiable and unnecessary ; but the conduct of the troops was approved of by the Duke of York, who was at that time the Commander-in-Chief.

In August 1846 the 1st Battalion proceeded to South Africa, and took part in what is known as the War of the Axe, inasmuch as the trouble arose largely out of the theft of an axe. In 1846 the Kaffirs showed great restlessness. Their tribes had become "fat," in other words, ready to take the field, and the young men amongst them were thirsting for a chance of covering themselves with glory, and earning the coveted title of warrior. They looked around for a pretext of beginning operations, and that pretext was soon discovered. A couple of Kaffir warriors were caught in the act of stealing an axe from a store at Fort Beaufort. In charge of an escort of a few civil constables, they were sent to Grahamstown for trial. The road between the two places led along the Kaffir border, and before the constables had gone many miles they were suddenly

attacked by a party of Gaikas, who had crossed the border with the intention of rescuing their comrades. The escort, defeated by superior numbers, made off, leaving their prisoners in the hands of the assailants. The two warriors, as it happened, were handcuffed to a couple of Hottentots, and as their rescuers were not able to unfasten the handcuffs, they murdered the Hottentots, and after cutting off their arms at the elbows, released their friends.

Upon hearing of the outrage, the Lieutenant-Governor at once communicated with the chiefs of the tribe whose members had done the wrong, and he demanded that the prisoners should be brought back, and the murderers of the Hottentots delivered up. Here was the chance for which the young bloods of the enemy were longing. They wished to set the white man and his power at naught ; and they did so. They treated the Governor's demands with contempt. There was nothing left for Britain to do but to begin operations immediately, and troops were pushed on to meet and overcome the enemy.

The Riflemen, on reaching the country, were compelled to suffer severely in many ways. They had bad weather to contend with, as well as thirst and hunger, and were, in short, called upon to face many of the hardships which had been endured in the Peninsula. At one time, when the scanty ration of biscuit had been eaten, and there was no prospect of receiving more, the men were so famished that they picked gum off the trees and ate it to lessen their hunger. At another time, when some cattle had been captured, there was an abundance of fresh beef, but no fire to cook it with, and no biscuit to eat with it. But despite the hardships of the undertaking, the Riflemen went triumphantly through it, and so well did they work and fight, that Mrs. Ward, the historian of the campaign, wrote that it was "the useful green jackets, the untiring Rifle Brigade, who worried Sandilli out of his hiding-place amongst the mountains." Sandilli was the Gaika chief, and the principal leader of the Kaffirs.

This was but the beginning of long and

brilliant labour in South Africa by the regiment. The Kaffir war was scarcely ended when operations were begun against the Dutch Boers, who had broken into rebellion. There was a smart action at Boem Plaats, the result of which was that the Boers were so completely crushed that they did not even attempt to rally. At Boem Plaats, some fifty miles south-west of Bloemfontein, the Boers, to the number of more than 2500, were strongly entrenched on some koppies, conducting their warfare in precisely the same way as their descendants of to-day. It was necessary, then, as it has been necessary in the late war, to assault them and drive them from their fastness, and this our soldiers did. The first attack was made by the Colonials, and upon those troops meeting with a check, the Riflemen advanced in extended order in the teeth of a well-aimed and heavy fire. But the Rifle Brigade, having set its heart on the position, held on until it got its heart's desire. The Rifles rushed the koppies with the bayonet, and the defenders were driven from two positions in succession. So brilliantly was the affair conducted that

Sir Harry Smith, an old Rifle officer himself, victor at the battle of Aliwal, in India, two years before, and a veteran of South America, the Peninsula, and Waterloo, described it as an affair as smart as he had ever witnessed. When the Rifles returned to King William's Town, Sir Harry complimented Colonel George Buller on commanding such a corps. He praised the regiment heartily for the bravery and endurance it had shown during the long and harassing warfare through which it had struggled. During this expedition the Riflemen marched between 1100 and 1200 miles ; crossed several difficult rivers with insufficient means of transport, and wore their clothing to shreds and the shoes off their feet. They distinguished themselves as much in time of peace as they had done in time of war. At King William's Town they were employed in building barracks, and in other peaceful work, and very well they did it, too.

On May 31, 1850, orders were issued for the 1st Battalion to hold itself in readiness to embark for England. It had then completed a

colonial tour of ten years' service, throughout which, it was officially stated, it had maintained the character for discipline, bravery, and interior economy which distinguished it during the Peninsular War.

In 1851 came the second expedition to Kaffraria, the 1st Battalion being again called upon to serve, and proceeding from England to take part in it. This was a long and harassing campaign, but again the Riflemen bore themselves with cheerful zeal, their labours receiving the honour of "South Africa, 1846-47, 1851-52-53."

Not many years passed before the Rifle Brigade was once more on active service. Then both the 1st and 2nd Battalions were ordered to the Crimea, and throughout that long and terrible campaign the Riflemen upheld the honour of their corps. They had suffered to an appalling extent while serving under Wellington ; but they were to undergo worse privations now—if worse were possible. The trenches and the battle-fields claimed a host of dead and wounded ; but disease proved a worse enemy than the Russians.

From first to last of the war the Rifle Brigade had nearly 900 officers and men killed and wounded, and disease claimed 700 more.

“Alma,” “Inkerman,” and “Sevastopol” are honours commemorating the services of the regiment in the Crimea. They stand for far more than the mere fighting—they represent those long months of courageous endurance which did as much to cover the British soldier with glory as any action that took place. The Crimea gave to the Rifle Brigade eight Victoria Crosses ; but it also enabled the historians to put on record many instances of suffering bravely borne which are at least as notable. General Sir Evelyn Wood, V.C., a participator in the campaign, says : “Surely there is nothing in history grander than the enduring courage and discipline of the British soldier as shown in the winter of 1854-55. There was practically no crime. It is true sentries fell asleep, but not till the men’s strength was exhausted by starvation, exposure, and overwork. . . . It is impossible to overpraise the disciplined silence of men under privations which in a few weeks

reduced one battalion from nearly 1000 effectives to a strength of 30 rank and file."

The 1st Battalion of the Rifle Brigade was only slightly engaged at the Alma, but the 2nd was with the Light Division, on which so much of the fighting fell. The Commander-in-Chief, Lord Raglan, in his despatch, stated that the capture of what was called the Great Redoubt was materially aided by the advance of four companies of the Rifle Brigade, under Major Norcott. Of this gallant officer Sir George Brown said that his conduct on that occasion was not only conspicuous to the whole division, but attracted the notice of the enemy; for the officer in command of the Russian battery, who was subsequently made prisoner, informed Lord Raglan that he had laid a gun especially for the "daring officer in the dark uniform on the black horse." At the Alma the British losses amounted to 2000 of all ranks. The 15,000 men expended about six cartridges each.

Balaklava—October 1854—did not give the regiment an opening for doing much work,

the 1st Battalion being only slightly engaged ; but the corps suffered in other ways during the month, if not in the actual hand-to-hand engagement, for it lost 39 officers and men in the trenches, killed and wounded. At Inkerman the Rifle Brigade was heavily engaged, its killed and wounded numbering 94. This was essentially an infantry fight, and the famous Russian general, Todleben, stated distinctly that it was our Riflemen who caused most damage. The Queen, in expressing her admiration of the valour of the troops on that desperate day, spoke of their " noble exertions in a conflict which is unsurpassed in the annals of war for persevering valour and chivalrous devotion " ; while Sir Evelyn Wood says : " Personally, from what I saw and heard during the war, I think, with the exception of some night fighting in and about the trenches, our infantry never fought during it with so great, resolute, and sustained determination as on the 5th of November."

On November 20, 1854, the Rifle Brigade—1st Battalion—conducted in the most brilliant

fashion an exploit known as "The Ovens." "The Ovens" were some Russian rifle-pits before Sebastopol, the name having been given to them by the British soldier, apparently, because of the hot fire which came from them. Canrobert, the French general, having drawn the attention of Lord Raglan to the importance of dislodging the Russian sharpshooters from these pits, the attack was given to the 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade, a party from which, consisting of Lieutenants Tryon, Bouchier, and Cuninghame, with 4 sergeants and 200 rank and file, was detailed for the service. The party was divided into the "stormers," under Tryon; the "supports," headed by Bouchier; and the "reserve," led by Cuninghame. Tryon marched his men to the trenches, and kept them under cover until darkness; then, silently and with the utmost caution, he crept over the broken ground towards the pits—first down an incline, then up a slope. So successful were Tryon's operations that he took the Russians completely by surprise, and forced them to retreat. But he had scarcely seized the pits

when a Russian battery fired grape and canister upon them, and the lieutenant fell dead. Bouchier, taking command, held what had been seized, and Cuninghame, coming up, made the advantage certain. Time after time during the night did the Russians fiercely try to wrest back the Ovens, but the Riflemen held the enemy at bay until morning, when they were relieved by another party of their comrades. In the affair the battalion lost Tryon and nine others killed, and seventeen wounded. This was the first feat of arms of its kind during the war. Lord Raglan spoke most highly of it, and Canrobert devoted to it a General Order. In addition to these distinctions, Bouchier and Cuninghame received the Victoria Cross; and the French war medal was conferred upon Colour-Sergeant Hicks, who was at Tryon's side when he was killed.

On the anniversary of Waterloo—June 18, 1855, the regiment shared in the unsuccessful assault on the Redan. The assault had been postponed to that date partly in the hope that a brilliant victory gained by British and

French troops together might remove any bitterness of feeling arising in the minds of both sides from the battle just forty years before. The attempt, desperate as it was, failed, and the allied forces suffered heavy loss. The Rifle Brigade had 2 officers killed and 3 wounded; and 33 of other ranks killed and 89 wounded, a total of 127. The Redan was assaulted by three columns, in each of which were 50 men carrying bags of hay or wool, and known as wool-bag men.

Sir Evelyn Wood relates that near the Naval Brigade, to which he belonged—he began his career in the Navy, and was then a midshipman—was a ladder party, “and in addition 50 men carrying wool-bags furnished by the Rifle Brigade. These were either volunteers or picked men, and in the words of their gallant leader, who still survives—now Major-General Sir William Blackett, Bart.—were amongst the ‘best in the battalion.’ . . . As we now know, all the carriers of the first ladder, and Captain Blackett, who succeeded in getting over the breastwork, were shot down in a few seconds,

and the remaining ladders were not taken far before all three officers fell, the Captain dangerously, the two subalterns severely wounded. Blackett lay on the ground until a sergeant carried him back into our trenches, and the other two officers were so badly injured that they were unable to lead their men."

It was of the Redan that Lord Raglan, who had personally seen what met the storming parties at Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajos, wrote in his despatch of June 19 that he never before witnessed such a continued and heavy fire of grape and musketry.

Sir Evelyn Wood describes the fire as one which it is difficult to picture in its intensity. "While there was no cessation of the shower of missiles, which pattered on the stony ground like tropical rain, yet every thirty seconds or so gusts of increased violence came sweeping down the hillside, reminding me of the recurring blasts of a storm as simulated behind the scenes of a theatre."

Sebastopol—September 8, 1855—cost the corps 2 officers killed and 8 wounded; 23 of

other ranks killed and 137 wounded, a total of 170; while other heavy casualties are represented by "1854-55, in the trenches, or not otherwise accounted for, 175 killed, 143 wounded," the latter number being imperfect in the return.

In 1900 a marble memorial was placed in the British Cemetery on Cathcart's Hill, outside Sebastopol. On this is recorded the fact that 11 officers and 931 men of the Rifle Brigade lost their lives during the Eastern Campaign of 1854-55. This cemetery has been made British territory for ever by the Russian Government.

The achievement of Bouchier and Cuninghame has been spoken of. Something must be said of the other half-dozen recipients of the cross, which was instituted at the close of the war. Those six were Private Joseph Bradshaw, Lieutenant the Hon. H. H. Clifford, Private R. Humpston, Captain J. S. Knox, Private Roderick M'Gregor, and Private Francis Wheatley. Bradshaw and Humpston won the cross on April 22, 1855, when, in broad daylight, they took part in an assault on a

Russian rifle-pit known as the "Nest," not far from the famous "Quarries." Bradshaw was promoted on the spot, and received five sovereigns—even then recognition of a private soldier's valour seldom got beyond pecuniary reward; subsequently, with Humpston, he got the French war medal. Clifford, who rose to be a general officer, was decorated for his bravery at Inkerman, where, getting together a few of the Riflemen near him, he charged the enemy, and saved a young soldier's life at the great risk of his own. Knox, who was then a sergeant, volunteered for the ladder party at the Redan, and acquitted himself with such courage and resolution that although twice wounded he refused to leave his comrades. He lost his left arm, but was not obliged to leave the service; and ultimately he retired with field rank. M'Gregor and Wheatley were awarded crosses for valour in the rifle-pits and in the trenches before Sebastopol respectively.

In 1855 a 3rd Battalion was added to the Brigade, and a 4th in 1857; and since then there have been four battalions. In 1857 the

regiment for the first time saw service in India, and in that country they secured another precious honour, "Lucknow," and three more crosses—these by Captain Henry Wilmot, Corporal W. Nash and Private David Hawkes, of the 2nd Battalion. On March 11, 1858, Wilmot's company was almost at the mercy of a body of the mutineers on the iron bridge at Lucknow, and as the close of the fight approached he was pinned at the end of a narrow street with only four men. Of these, one lay helpless, shot through the legs. Nash and Hawkes seized their comrade, and Hawkes, although himself badly wounded, carried the burden a long way. Wilmot covered the retreat, firing the rifles as fast as the men could load them for him. Captain Wilmot still lives as Colonel Sir Henry Wilmot, V.C. He is also a K.C.B., an M.A., a J.P., and an ex-M.P., and has been long enough associated with the Volunteer movement to receive the Volunteer Decoration. In a word, he remains a very distinguished old Rifleman.

If "Lucknow" is the only Indian honour, yet

it represents long and faithful work. The services of the Rifle Brigade have been admirably summarised in a sentence—"One battalion alone kept the field, from its landing, in November 1857, until the last day of the Mutiny ; marched 1745 miles in 161 marches ; often bivouacked in the open ; never once in quarters ; and had a fourth of its officers, and a fifth of its non-commissioned officers and men killed, wounded, or invalided in twenty months." The regiment was granted the clasp for "Central India," but this is not one of the honours.

Another cross was gained by a member of the regiment in 1866, when the 1st Battalion was stationed in Canada—gained, too, under very exceptional circumstances. Private T. O’Hea was, during the Fenian Raid, one of a guard over a railway-van which contained 2000 lbs. of ammunition. When Danville Station was reached it was seen that the van was on fire. With all speed it was detached and pushed down the line, away from the station, the terrified inhabitants rushing from the neighbouring houses. O’Hea,

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From a photograph by Charles Knight, Aldershot.

CAPTAIN W. N. CONGREVE, V.C.

with a courage which has never been surpassed in the corps, ran down to the vehicle, burst the door open, tore the covering from the ammunition, and put out the flames, thus averting an awful explosion. It was not until 1900 that the medal for the Fenian Raids of 1866 and 1870, which the 1st Battalion was employed in suppressing, was granted.

From that time until the present year, 1900, no fresh Victoria Cross was won by the regiment. The war in South Africa gave Captain Congreve the decoration, making the fourteenth awarded to officers and men of the Rifle Brigade since the cross was instituted. This was the first Victoria Cross won in the South African War.

The 3rd Battalion was employed in 1864 in the Mohmund expedition, and was engaged at Shubkudder. For this service it was granted the Frontier Medal with clasp.

CHAPTER VIII

ASHANTEE TO KHARTOUM

“ASHANTEE,” “Ali Masjid,” “Afghanistan,” 1878-9, “Burma,” 1885-87, and “Khartoum” sum up the services of the Rifle Brigade since the time of the Mutiny.

The 2nd Battalion took part in the expedition to Ashantee in 1873-74, and suffered pretty heavy loss. Three officers and 35 men were wounded in the advance to Coomassie. Of these several died, while many who fell victims to the climate succumbed after the return home of the expedition.

The 4th Battalion was employed on active service for the first time in 1877, when it shared in the expedition on the north-west frontier of India against the Jowakis. A year later the battalion took part in the Afghan

War, and was present at the capture of the fortress of Ali Masjid. For the third time in a limited period it was campaigning, the services of the battalion being needed three years later in the operations against the Waziris.

The 2nd and 3rd Battalions were represented in the Nile Expeditionary Force of 1884-85, and were present at Abu Klea, El Gubat, and the subsequent engagements in the effort to rescue Gordon.

From 1885 to 1887 the 1st Battalion had a part in the expedition which ended in the conquest of Burmah, while in 1888 the 4th Battalion served in Burmah, and was represented in the Karen expedition in 1889.

In the second Ashantee expedition—1895-96—a detachment of the 2nd Battalion took part, and very soon after Coomassie had been occupied detachments of the 2nd and 4th Battalions joined the Rifle Company which assisted in putting down the Mashonaland rebellion.

The 3rd Battalion in 1897 suffered heavily—not in action, but from disease—in the unfortunate expedition into the Tochi Valley.

It lost 3 officers and more than 100 men from fever and dysentery.

Such is a bald outline of the work of the Rifle Brigade before the Khartoum expedition.

Although 1898 was the first year in which the regiment had been called upon to furnish a body of troops for service in Egypt, that was not the first time its Riflemen had accompanied expeditions to the country of the Nile. In 1885 Captain — now Lieutenant-Colonel — Willoughby Verner, Rifle Brigade, was Deputy-Assistant-Adjutant-General of the Intelligence Department, Nile Expeditionary Force, a position in which he was succeeded by Major Kitchener, who was then rapidly becoming famous and who was subsequently to crush the Mahdi's forces. In *Sketches in the Soudan*, Colonel Verner gives this example of the desperate fanaticism which possessed the Mahdi's followers:—A sheik broke into the square at Abu Klea, on horseback; and, planting his banner, he began to read the Koran from a scroll he carried. He was killed by Acting-Corporal Yetton, of the 2nd Battalion Rifle

Brigade. Yetton was attacked by several Arabs, who were acting as escort to the intrepid chief, and he received many severe spear-wounds. Later the corporal received the silver medal for distinguished service in the field. Riflemen were again concerned in a little affair, for Captain Verner was on one occasion ordered to take the *Bordein*, one of General Gordon's river steamers, with Lieutenant Maxwell Sherston, of the Rifle Brigade, and 25 mounted infantry, and occupy an island and establish a defensible post there.

For the Khartoum campaign the 2nd Battalion of the regiment completed Kitchener's force. The battalion went from Malta, where it was quartered at the time, to Cairo, and was there incorporated into the Sirdar's army. "The white tents, the muddy Nile, the sandy, heat-stricken desert, and now the shell-shattered tomb of the Mahdi, and the mud huts of Omdurman, have taken the place of the two-storeyed, flat-roofed, cool-looking buildings" which the battalion had occupied at Malta—the Vardala Barracks.

At Khartoum — September 2, 1898 — the Anglo-Egyptian army numbered 22,000, and was opposed to a force estimated to be at least twice that strength. The Soudan army was disposed in the form of a semi-circle, with its base along the bank of the river. On the extreme left was Lyttelton's Brigade, followed in turn by Wauchope's, Maxwell's, Macdonald's, and Lewis's. Lyttelton's position was flanked by the 32nd Field Battery, while the 21st Lancers were within the enclosure of the troops, the whole being backed by the gun-boats on the Nile. Field guns and Maxims were placed along the line at intervals. The 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade, under the command of Colonel F. Howard, C.B., was on the extreme left of Lyttelton's Brigade, which bore the first attack by the Dervishes.

Early in the morning—half-past six—the scouts reported that the enemy was advancing, and very soon afterwards he was seen on the crests of neighbouring hillocks. He came on rapidly, only to be swept back by a most withering and destructive fire. Fearless though

they were, and scornful of death, it was impossible for even the Dervish fanatics to bear up against the fire from the Riflemen and other troops forming the 2nd Brigade of the British force—the 1st Northumberland Fusiliers, the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers, and the 1st Grenadier Guards—these four regiments being in the order named, and together forming one of the finest body of troops that ever assembled on the field of battle. Amongst them were the Queen's Company of Guards, with an average height of 6 feet 2 inches.

In an hour the advance had been checked. The Dervishes had been literally mown down by the rifle and artillery fire, and the sand was strewn with dead and dying. All this, too, with little loss to our own forces, for the enemy had been destroyed before he could get close enough to do mischief. But fresh firing was heard, and it was necessary to charge a body of Dervishes who had rallied on a hillock. The 21st Lancers routed them, and suffered that loss and won that fame which made them for the time the heroes of the Army. Of the total loss of

the Anglo-Egyptian force that day—54 killed and 387 wounded—the share of the 21st was 24 killed and 70 wounded. The 2nd Rifle Brigade subsequently joined the entry into the city of Omdurman, and a superb set of men they looked as they swung over the sand after the victory they had helped to win. Never in their history had they experienced better arrangements than those which were made by the Sirdar for his troops. The ease and comparative comfort with which they were taken from Malta to the area of war were in marvellous contrast with the unspeakable miseries of the Peninsula, the Crimea, and the Mutiny.

CHAPTER IX

SOUTH AFRICA AGAIN

WE have seen something of the life and work of the Rifle Brigade in many parts of the world, and how closely that life and work are wrapped up with the fights in the Peninsula. So far the regiment has been specially identified with the victories of Wellington ; but it has now had so long a record of service in South Africa that the building up of British power in that country must in future be as nearly allied with the corps as was the crushing of Napoleon's power. It was the fortune of the regiment to share in the two Kaffir wars, and the earlier operations against the Boers ; it has been its lot to help to reassert its country's power, and for many months to endure privations and struggles which have many points of resemblance to

the past sufferings of the corps in time of action.

It could not well be within the purpose of a history like this to deal with the causes of the war which has now been almost closed, and which compelled Great Britain to put in the field the largest and most perfect army that in modern times has crossed the seas. In an assemblage which included most of the British cavalry regiments and one or more battalions from every territorial regiment, and from each of the regiments of Foot Guards, except the newly-formed Irish Guards, it is needless to say that the Rifle Brigade was well represented. Its 1st and 2nd Battalions have served throughout the war, and it will be the purpose of the remaining pages to narrate the doings of the officers and men of both.

When the war broke out the 1st Battalion was at Parkhurst, and the 2nd in Crete. At the beginning of October 1899 military preparations were being quietly but effectively made, and at the War Office there were many important conferences. Troops in large numbers were on

their way to South Africa, and at the temporary Rifle Depot, Gosport, orders were received to provide kits and accoutrements for 1500 Reserve men of the 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade, which was to leave Parkhurst on about the 20th. The barracks were to be occupied by Reserve men, and warrants for calling them up had been issued for the Rifle Depot. The other regiments which, with the 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade, formed the First Army Corps, were in readiness to leave various parts of Great Britain.

On October 28 the 1st Battalion left Southampton on the Union liner *German*, which carried other details—in all 40 officers, 2 warrant officers, and 1428 non-commissioned officers and men. The departure was witnessed by great crowds of spectators, amongst those who were present to wish the troops good luck and a safe return being H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, Colonel-in-Chief of the Rifle Brigade, who had previously inspected the transport. By this time there had been hard fighting and severe British losses in South Africa, amongst

the regiments with heavy casualties being the sister corps, the King's Royal Rifles.

Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion had been pushed to the seat of war from Crete. They not only went straight into a hostile country, but straight into action. Early on the morning of October 30, when their comrades in the *German* had just got clear of British waters, they reached Ladysmith from Durban, where they had disembarked, and marched direct to the battlefield, sharing in the action of Farquhar's Farm. The battalion, advancing to Lombard's Kop, was ordered to attack one of the positions held by the enemy, and this they did in such splendid style that the Boers were dislodged and forced to fly. The battalion, late in the afternoon, returned to the town, worn out, it is true, but in excellent spirits. The Rifles were with Colonel Hamilton's Brigade—1st Devonshire, 2nd Gordon Highlanders, 1st Manchester, and 2nd Rifle Brigade.

In describing this affair General Sir George White, V.C., said, on October 31, in his

telegram to the War Office:—"I took out from Ladysmith a brigade of mounted troops, two brigade divisions Royal Artillery, Natal Field Battery, and two brigades of infantry to reconnoitre in force the enemy's main position to the north, and, if opportunity should offer, to capture the hill behind Farquhar's Farm, which had on the previous day been held in strength by enemy." Sir George went on to show that the reconnaissance forced the enemy to disclose his position fully, and after a strong counter attack on our right infantry brigade and cavalry had been repulsed, the troops were slowly withdrawn to camp, pickets being left in observation.

Unfortunately, however, all the troops had not the same success as the Rifles. During the operations a column consisting of the 10th Mountain Battery, four and a half companies of the Gloucesters, and six companies of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, which had been despatched to seize Nicholson's Nek, or some position near it, in order to turn the enemy's right flank, was forced to surrender, owing to the stampeding

of the mules and the consequent loss of guns and small-arm ammunition reserve.

The Rifles had scarcely become accustomed to the appearance of the town when the Boers closed in, and for four months—November 2, 1899, to March 1, 1900—the British force was shut up in Ladysmith by double its number of Boers. No one knew what the end of that investment would be, and in many quarters, both at home and abroad, it was feared that a large British force, for the first time in a century, might be compelled, through stress of famine and disease, and because of want of ammunition, to surrender. The enemy and famine tried their hardest to reduce the garrison; but through all the long, weary, almost hopeless weeks the troops held out, and at last joined hands with the comrades who, in other ways, had suffered quite as heavily in marching to relieve them. The situation was the more dramatic since sister battalions were with the beleaguered forces and the relieving army also.

In a special Army Order which he issued,

General Sir Redvers Buller, V.C., said :—" The relief of Ladysmith unites two forces which have striven with conspicuous gallantry and splendid determination to maintain the honour of their Queen and country. The garrison of Ladysmith for four months held the position against every attack with complete success and endured its privations with unflinching fortitude. The relieving force had to make its way through unknown country, across unfordable rivers, and over almost inaccessible heights in the face of a fully-prepared, well-armed, tenacious enemy. By the exhibition of the truest courage, which burns steadily besides flashing brilliantly, it accomplished its object, and added a glorious page to our history. Soldiers, sailors, Colonials, and the home-bred have done this, united by one desire, and inspired by one patriotism."

One of the *Times* special correspondents admirably summarised the defence. The garrison, as the Natal field force, "fought two successful engagements, suffered a check, and extricated itself. During its investment it has kept at bay a force double its number, fortify-

ing and holding a perimeter of 14 miles against siege artillery. It has made two successful sorties, and repulsed two organised assaults in force, the last with severe punishment to the enemy."

Of the sorties referred to one was carried out in the most complete and gallant style by the 2nd Rifle Brigade. On the night of December 10 Sir George White sent Lieutenant-Colonel Metcalfe, 2nd Rifle Brigade, with 500 men of his battalion, to make a sortie with the object of capturing Surprise Hill and destroying a 4.7 howitzer which was mounted there. So well did Colonel Metcalfe and his men do their work that they reached the crest of the hill undiscovered, and by a swift and resolute attack drove off the enemy. The gun was successfully destroyed with gun-cotton by Lieutenant Digby Jones, R.E. When, however, the Rifles sought to return they found that the Boers barred their retirement, but with the free use of the bayonet they forced their way through the opposing ranks, and caused the enemy to suffer severely. Lieutenant Jones was killed later in the siege,



From a photograph by Heath, Plymouth.

LIEUT.-COL. C. T. E. METCALFE, 2ND BATTALION RIFLE
BRIGADE.

after conduct so gallant that if he had lived he would have received the Victoria Cross.

This distinction was not lightly purchased by the Rifle Brigade. Lieutenant Fergusson and 10 rank and file were killed ; Captain Paley, Second-Lieutenants Davenport (severely) and Bond (dangerously), and 40 rank and file were wounded, and 6 stretcher-bearers who remained behind in charge of the wounded were taken prisoners—a total of 50 casualties for the battalion. By December 22 the Boers had mounted another howitzer on Surprise Hill, to replace that which the Rifle Brigade had captured.

A spirited description of this sortie was written by Mr. William Maxwell, war correspondent of the *Standard*, who was shut up in Ladysmith throughout the siege. From his account the following is taken :—

Between 3000 and 4000 yards to the north of the town is a ridge known to the garrison as Surprise Hill. Here the enemy had posted a howitzer, throwing a 40-lb. shell, which was an occasional source of annoyance. At ten o'clock last night, December 10,

Colonel Metcalfe and five companies of the Rifle Brigade, with Major Wing, of the 69th Field Battery, and Lieutenant Digby Jones, set out from King's Post, an entrenched kopje on the north of the old camp. Their mission was to storm Surprise Hill, and to blow up the howitzer.

Moving silently over the plain, they came to our most northern outpost, the ridge named Observation Hill. Here they laid hidden in the short grass for an hour and a half until the moon sank behind the clouds. Then they rose like shadows out of the veldt, and went on, a phantom army, without a sound or a pause. Avoiding the level crossing they cut the wire fence, and passed across the railway, where they left half a company to secure the line of retreat. Beyond the railway stretched a rough plain to the foot of Surprise Hill. . . .

Our storming party crept silently towards the hill, moving a little to the left in order to avoid a picket. In a second the deep silence of the night was broken by the rattle of musketry, and the black crest of Surprise Hill scintillated with flashing lights. A field gun on the kopje to the right added a fuller note to the overture, while "pom-pom," the quick-firing gun on the western ridge, joined the symphony with his customary haste. These were the signals to the pickets and patrols, and were not of long duration. Having uttered their warning, they left their friends on Surprise Hill to fight out the battle.

The encounter was short and desperate. As soon as the challenge was given Colonel Metcalfe ordered his men to fix bayonets and charge. They needed no urging. With a cheer they dashed over the crest, and, driving the Boers before them, made straight for the gun pit. Three or four men hurried out as they approached, and escaped in the darkness.

A circle of bayonets was drawn round the gun emplacement, and Major Wing, with Lieutenant Digby Jones, in charge of gunners and sappers, entered. The howitzer had disappeared. . . . The howitzer was found. It had been drawn out of the emplacement, whether for greater security against surprise, or in order that the gunners might use the pit as a shelter on Sunday, is a question that each must decide for himself. It was on the crest of a hill 10 yards distant. Protected by a ring of rifles, Lieutenant Jones and his engineers fixed charges of gun-cotton to the muzzle and breech of the howitzer, and applied the fuse. Two minutes, the length of the fuse, three minutes, five minutes passed, and there was no explosion. Something must have happened to the fuse. Lieutenant Digby Jones went back and lighted another. Two minutes later the muzzle of the howitzer split into fragments with a roar and a brilliant flame. The work was done, and with a loud cheer the two companies of the Rifle Brigade began the march back to camp.

This was a task even more dangerous than storming

the hill. . . . The enemy was on the alert and ready to pounce upon the column as it descended into the plain. As our men fell back towards the crest of the hill the Boers pressed forward, emptying the magazines of their Mausers with greater rapidity than precision. The retiring companies walked slowly between the two lines of fire, and there can be little doubt that the bullets of the enemy did more mischief in their own ranks than in those of the storming party. The struggle grew fiercer near the foot of the hill, where the two and a half companies were drawn up in converging lines, so as to prevent any of the stormers from missing their way in the dark.

Colonel Metcalfe had given the order to cease fire. Deceived by this cessation of active hostilities, the Boers came closer, and strove to lead our men amongst the rocks by addressing them in English and as comrades. This ruse did not succeed. Waiting till they were within striking distance our men threw themselves upon the enemy with the bayonet. The struggle was short, and the issue never for a moment doubtful.

On January 6 the Boers made a fierce assault on the defences of Ladysmith, and General White reported that he was very hard pressed. The gravest results were for a little while anticipated at home, and anxiety was not allayed until the General subsequently tele-

graphed that after seventeen hours' fighting the enemy had been victoriously repulsed. Some of the British entrenchments on Wagon Hill were taken three times by the enemy, and as often recaptured by our troops. The Boers held one point during the whole day, but as night fell the Devons, in a heavy rainstorm, charged the position irresistibly, and drove the Boers out of it with the bayonet. It was calculated that the enemy suffered a total loss of 1100; while the British loss was 13 officers and 135 rank and file killed, and 28 officers and 244 rank and file wounded, of whom several subsequently died—148 killed, and 272 wounded—a total of 420. Of the 2nd Rifle Brigade Lieutenant L. D. Hall was killed, and Brevet-Major G. H. Thesiger, Captain H. M. Biddulph, Captain S. Mills, Captain R. B. Stephens, Lieutenant Maclachlan, and Second Lieutenant C. E. Harrison were wounded. Of the non-commissioned officers and men 18 were killed and 32 were wounded.

As the siege and relief of Ladysmith will be one of the most memorable events in the history of the Rifle Brigade, it is well to put on

record a few of the principal features of the life of the beleaguered garrison, that future Riflemen may understand what the Riflemen of to-day were called upon to endure, just as this generation knows what its predecessors in the Peninsula, the Crimea, and the Mutiny went through.

An officer of the Royal Engineers, writing to a relative on the 101st day of the siege, gave details which form a vivid picture of the life of the place. "Nobody can imagine what is going on here at all," he said, "as they tell us very little, but the general impression is that we are to hold on to this place, and keep a lot of Boers round here as long as possible, while Roberts marches on to Bloemfontein. The rations have just been reduced again, and now a man gets half a pound of bread or biscuit and 1 lb. meat a day, with 1 oz. sugar, and a little tea, coffee, pepper, salt, etc. It's just enough to keep a man alive, but you can't expect to get in trim to march very far, or do much work upon it, and the worst of it is, when a man gets ill

and can't eat meat, there is practically nothing for him. Lately nearly all the horses in the place have been turned loose by day to graze, and put into pens at night, and some are killed for food every day, as there is no forage for them. The railway station is used for a chevril manufactory, chevril being, of course, the horse for bovril, and it's very good stuff indeed. They make sausage meat in large quantities for the garrison out of horse, and the cooked meat from which the chevril is made is given away, so a man has more meat than he wants ; but with little bread and no vegetables, the extra meat does not do the poor fellows very much good, and they are beginning to look very worn—particularly the infantry, who may, perhaps, have had to lie in a trench 3 feet wide and 3 feet deep, without being able to raise their heads, every other day and night, for 100 days, with no cover but a waterproof sheet against a very hot sun by day, and awful rains occasionally.

“I don't know what Ladysmith is like as a peace station, but it's a horrible place to be

besieged in. At the beginning we lived in camp, and the men are still in tents practically in the town, but we have gone to a deserted house, where they all live except me. I've built myself a half underground hut in the camp, which I live in, just going round to our mess-house for meals. The camp is awfully hot and smelly, and full of flies, so I don't stay there much.

"The 6-in. gun on the top of Bulwana, 8000 yards off, has just begun firing again, and a shell has just gone past the house—I should say about 30 yards away, though they make such an awful noise that everybody near always thinks he's going to be hit, and they always seem closer than they are. Eight thousand yards is a long way, but he is right up above us, and by putting his nose well up in the air, he can easily reach. . . . Luckily he makes a lot of smoke, and so we see when he goes off, and then a trumpet sounds the retreat and the double, and he is such a long way off there is nearly twenty seconds left for anybody who wants to take cover to

get away before the shell actually arrives. The shell is about 20 inches long and 6 inches round, and weighs about 100 lb., so if it hits you fairly in the stomach you are extremely likely to be hurt. Still, the town is a big place, and with only one gun really firing at it now there is a very small chance of being hit. A great many people, including some civilians and women, take no notice of him at all. We have a great deal of horse to eat now, and one really rather prefers it to the beef which comes of the trek oxen and is awfully tough. The horse-flesh, so far as we have seen it as yet, is much tenderer and rather richer, and nearly everybody can take it. The ration biscuit is very like superior dog biscuit, and the only fault to find with it is that you can eat your day's allowance in three minutes."

A private soldier in a mounted infantry company stated that in Ladysmith they never had a bit of bread for three months, and had to kill their own horses and eat them. They got a little biscuit to last twenty-four hours. They had not had a smoke of tobacco for more than

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three months. As a substitute they dried tea leaves, leaves off trees, and even grass, and smoked them.

When the siege began there were 12,000 fighting men and over 2000 civilians, besides natives, Kaffirs, and Indians—in all 21,000 persons were on rations. Enteric and dysentery made sad havoc, these diseases and casualties causing 8000 fighting men to pass through the hospital. The severest privations were borne, the reduced rations being only enough to keep them together and in anything like fitness. From January 15 to March 1 there were more than 200 deaths from disease alone. Thirty old horses and mules were killed daily for food, and made into soup and sausages. By February 21 decent food was so scarce that astonishingly high prices were obtained for such things as were offered by auction. A tin of condensed milk fetched 10s.; a tin of coffee, 17s.; eggs, £2 : 8s. per doz.; 1 lb. of fat beef, 11s.; 14 lb. of oatmeal, £2 : 19 : 6; a 1 lb. bottle of jam, £1 : 11s.; a dozen matches, 13s. 6d.; a packet of cigarettes, £1 : 5s.; 50

cigars, £9 : 5s. ; a $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. cake of tobacco, £2 : 5s. ; $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of tobacco, £3 : 5s. ; a plate of potatoes, 19s. ; a glass of jelly, 18s. ; and other articles—not many of them—at the same rate.

During the investment the total number of casualties were, of those who were killed or died of wounds, 24 officers and 235 men ; of disease, 6 officers, 340 men ; wounded, 70 officers and 520 men, exclusive of white civilians.

When relieved the garrison were on half a pound of meal a day, and were supplementing their meat ration by horses and mules. The men were “white, pale, and worn” as the result of their privations, and General Buller reported that they would want “a little nursing” before they were fit for the field.

CHAPTER X

FIGHTING A WAY TO LADYSMITH

WHILE the Ladysmith garrison were holding out so valiantly under General White, the relieving force, under General Buller, was making its way in spite of difficulties so tremendous that time after time they seemed insuperable. The 1st Battalion, on board the *German*, had reached Cape Town on November 20, and had joined the army of General Buller, himself an inflexible Rifleman—not of the old 95th, but the old 60th. On December 15 General Buller met with a serious reverse at Colenso. He began his advance from Chieveley on the Boer positions near Colenso. There are two fordable positions on the Tugela River, about two miles apart, and his intention was that General Hart's Brigade should

attack on the left and General Hildyard on the right, while General Lyttelton, with a central brigade, should be ready to support either. Early in the day Buller saw that Hart would not be able to force a passage, and directed him to withdraw. But in the meantime he had attacked with great bravery, and his leading battalion, the 1st Connaught Rangers, had suffered heavily. Hildyard was then ordered to attack, and he did so, his force occupying Colenso Station and the adjoining houses. The fire of the enemy, however, suddenly overwhelmed two batteries of artillery which had advanced close to the river-bank, and, despite the most valiant efforts to save them, the guns had to be abandoned. Eventually General Buller was forced to retire, with the loss of 11 guns and more than 1000 officers, non-commissioned officers and men killed and wounded. The 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade was not heavily engaged, but had several officers and men wounded—Second-Lieutenant R. G. Graham severely, and Captain W. N. Congreve slightly.

The regiment did not share in the operations at Spion Kop—January 24, 1900—in which many regiments suffered heavily. By that time the Rifle Brigade's losses in action numbered 130—13 officers wounded; 38 other ranks killed, 74 wounded, 5 missing. But already, if it had not been able to share in all the fighting of the war, the regiment was earning precious honours to add to its already extensive list.

It has been remarked that the Rifle Brigade was not heavily engaged at Colenso; but here was done a deed which will be remembered long after the general events of the campaign have been forgotten. In his despatch relating to the Colenso reverse General Buller made a number of recommendations for gallantry in the field—four for the Victoria Cross, and nineteen for the Medal for Distinguished Service in the Field. The first of the four was Captain W. N. Congreve, of the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade. When the detachments serving the guns of the 14th and 66th Field Batteries, R.A., had been either killed, wounded or driven from their weapons by

infantry fire at close range, some few horses and drivers were left alive in a donga, about 500 yards behind the deserted guns. Here they sheltered, while the intervening space was swept by shell and rifle fire.

“Captain Congreve,” said General Buller in his despatch, “who was in the donga, assisted to hook a team into a limber, went out and assisted to limber up a gun ; being wounded he took shelter, but seeing Lieutenant Roberts fall badly wounded he went out again and brought him in. Some idea of the nature of the fire may be gathered from the fact that Captain Congreve was shot through the leg, through the toe of his boot, grazed on the elbow and the shoulder, and his horse shot in three places. Lieutenant the Honourable F. Roberts, King’s Royal Rifles, assisted Captain Congreve. He was wounded in three places. Corporal Nurse, Royal Field Artillery, 66th Battery, also assisted. I recommend the above three for the Victoria Cross.”

Lieutenant Roberts, only son of Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, V.C., Commanding-

in-Chief in South Africa, never lived to receive his cross.

On February 12 General French's Cavalry Division, which had greatly distinguished itself by its rapid movements, successfully crossed the Riet River at Dekiel's Drift. It was a slight affair, costing us one killed—a trooper of Roberts's Horse—and three wounded. Amongst these was Captain H. G. Majendie, of the Rifle Brigade, second in command of Roberts's Horse, who was so severely hurt that he died the same night.

In the affair of Potgeiter's Drift—February 1900—the regiment was actively engaged. General Lyttelton's force crossed the river at two o'clock, the Durham Light Infantry and the Rifle Brigade leading. For a quarter of a mile they crept along the high bank of the river, sheltering; then opened out in extended order across the plain. Instantly fire was opened on them by the enemy, from koppies in front, and dongas and broken ground on their right and right rear. By this time the artillery had all come across from the left, and concentrated

their fire on the nearest koppie. The Durhams advanced in extended order until the foot of the koppie was reached. Then bayonets were fixed, and the hill was charged. Some of the enemy, mostly armed natives, waited till the stormers reached the summit before they sought safety by running down the other side. Some of these were shot as they retreated. One—he was only slightly hurt—showed his gratitude by shooting an officer who was protecting him from the bayonets. Throughout the day Lyttelton's troops held about half a mile of the ridge, being under fire all the time. In the evening they were relieved by Hildyard's Brigade, which during the night was shelled by the Boers.

The position which had been taken up proving untenable, the river was recrossed, and the whole British force was withdrawn beyond the range of the Boer guns. In these operations, extending from February 5 to 7, the 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade had 5 officers wounded—Captain G. P. Tharp, Captain F. G. Talbot, Lieutenant C. O. B. Blewitt, Lieu-

tenant Ellis, and Lieutenant Sir T. A. A. M. Cuninghame, Bart.; 4 rank and file killed, 76 wounded, and 1 missing. By this time the Rifle Brigade's total casualties were estimated at 218, killed and wounded.

After a short lull the Rifle Brigade was again hard at work. On February 18 Buller moved round the enemy's flank, and drove the Boers across the Tugela River. The weather was intensely hot, and the ground exceedingly difficult; but the Rifle Brigade overcame all obstacles, and earned special praise from the General. "The energy and dash of the troops," he said in his telegram to the War Office, "have been very pleasant to see, and all have done well. The work of the irregular cavalry, the Queen's, the Scots Fusiliers, and the Rifle Brigade was, perhaps, most noticeable."

Writing of the work of the force of which the Rifle Brigade formed part, the *Times* correspondent said that their brilliant flanking movement undoubtedly won the Boer position, which it was clear the enemy intended to hold at all costs. All along Green Hill were

elaborately made trenches, some of which had been blasted out of the solid rock. There were also several enfilading trenches, carefully concealed. Probably if the main attack had been delivered on Green Hill—ironically so called because it is bare of trees—it would have failed. The position was strongly held, for when the Rifle Brigade reached the top they saw between 2000 and 3000 mounted men manœuvring a mile beyond. Thinking that these were Hildyard's mounted infantry, they did not fire.

In these operations—February 12 to 14—the battalion had 2 men killed, Captain A. D. Stewart, Captain W. G. Bentinck, and 14 others wounded. Captain Stewart subsequently met a soldier's death at Kaapmuiden.

General Buller's advance was at last to be successful. On February 27 General Barton assaulted and carried the top of Pieter's Hill, turning the enemy's left; and then General Warren, in splendid style, carried the Boers' main position, scattering the enemy, and taking about 60 prisoners.

Some further fighting, some further suffering, and the beleaguered and the relievers joined hands. There were scenes of indescribable enthusiasm as the victorious forces met—brothers and sisters were rejoined ; husbands and wives were re-united ; parents and children were again together — and amid it all strong men, who had stood the stress of fight and famine without flinching, wept. It was a famous time, for almost concurrently with the relief of Ladysmith came the collapse of the Boer stand, and the surrender of their leader Cronje at Paardeberg, with 4000 men. Amongst the returns made by Lord Roberts of the Paardeberg casualties were these :—"1st Rifle Brigade—wounded, 4." At the same time was notified, in the Ladysmith casualties, the loss of Lieutenant R. W. Pearson, Rifle Brigade, who died of enteric.

In the final stages of General Buller's advance, for February 19, were the following casualties :—1st Rifle Brigade—wounded, Lieutenant W. R. Wingfield Digby, and 11 men ; Captain and Quartermaster F. Stone, and Second-Lieutenant C. D'A. B. S. Baker-Carr ;

2nd Rifle Brigade—wounded, Second-Lieutenant H. W. Dumaresq. In his return of the losses in the fighting between February 14 and February 27, prior to the relief of Ladysmith, General Buller gave the casualties of the 1st Rifle Brigade as follows:—killed, 13; wounded, Captain and Adjutant S. C. Long, Second-Lieutenant J. L. Buxton, and 110 others; missing, 6.

In addition to the actions named there were many smaller affairs in which the Rifle Brigade was represented. In the Koorn Spruit ambushade, near Bloemfontein Waterworks, at the end of March, the 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade (mounted infantry) had 6 men wounded, 1 so severely that he soon died, and 4 missing.

It seemed as if the war had almost to a certainty concluded, when there was further brilliant work and heavy loss by the regiment. After Pretoria was entered—June 5, 1900—there was desultory fighting in many places with the enemy, the difficulties of the country making it almost impossible to deal adequately with the existing remnant.

Towards the end of August Lord Roberts himself took the field, moving from Pretoria to Belfast. Here his movements were necessarily slow, owing to the great extent and difficult nature of the country over which he was operating, but on the 27th he was able to report a satisfactory advance and decided success. The work fell entirely on General Buller's troops, and resulted in the capture of Bergendal, a very strong position about two miles north-west of Dalmanutha railway station. The approach to the position was across an open glaxis for two or three thousand yards. In a word, the place was a natural fortress, surrounded by a glaxis absolutely without cover. After heavy bombardment, the koppies were assaulted with resistless dash by the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade, supported by the 1st Battalion Inniskilling Fusiliers. The position was taken after one of the most brilliant bayonet charges in the war.

The brunt of the fighting fell on the Rifles, who suffered heavily. Colonel C. T. E. Metcalfe, who, said General Buller in his despatch, "led his regiment most gallantly, and whose dis-

positions were excellent," was severely wounded ; Captain G. L. Lysley and 11 men were killed ; Captain W. H. W. Steward and Captain E. G. Campbell died of their wounds ; Captain R. Alexander and Captain J. D. Heriot-Maitland, and Lieutenant B. A. Turner and Second-Lieutenant W. F. Basset were severely wounded. Of the non-commissioned officers and men 103 were wounded. There was a total list of casualties of 126. Of the wounded 10 died within two or three days of the action.

Nineteen prisoners and about 20 of the enemy's dead were left in the position, which had been chiefly defended by the Johannesburg Police.

When the details of Bergendal reached home, it was seen that the first reports of the dash and courage of the regiment had not been in any way exaggerated. The special correspondent of the *Standard* wrote in the most enthusiastic terms of the gallant manner in which the Rifles stormed and captured the position. The selection of the base of the long rolling ridge south to north up to Bergendal, so that every British

soldier who showed on the sky-line would be silhouetted into a prominent mark, was, he said, the essence of defensive generalship. Ordinarily speaking, nine trained soldiers out of ten would probably have seized the crest of the ridge, lined it with trenches, and planted their guns a little out of sight. The simple Boer, however, with an intuitive stroke of genius, had placed both men and guns in the dip on the other side of the ridge. Consequently not only had the Boer riflemen merely to wait for our men to show themselves on the sky-line, but the British guns could not be taken near enough to distinguish clearly the position of the enemy's artillery.

General Buller's column had not gone a mile from the little Komati when the affair developed so ominously that the transport had to be halted and finally outspanned within a mile and a half only of the previous camping-ground. The British position was this—the enemy were ranged along the left base of the ridge in close touch with our right flank of advance, and, owing to the column having to move along the western hollow of the same ridge, it was continually

within range of the enemy's Long Tom. The British, therefore, had to fight their way for two days on to the Bergendal position, and this, too, after a week of incessant and harassing out-post work. But, despite the heavy toil they had undergone, Buller's infantry conducted themselves as they had done throughout months of work so arduous and incessant that it has been scarcely equalled and probably seldom excelled in the history of the Rifle Brigade.

By Sunday, August 26, the Boer left wing had been handled so severely that it was forced to retire on its centre towards Bergendal and Dalmanutha. Generals Pole-Carew and French were at that time covering the line and the extreme left, but it was General Buller himself upon whom fell the task of making the attack on the Boer main body at the bend of the railway line. The enemy's position was exceptionally strong, running from the west of Bergendal along the railway to Dalmanutha. "It was one series of carefully-prepared entrenchments, commanding koppies strewn with huge rocks."

Until Buller's force got within striking distance of Bergendal the Boers made a running fight on the flank. The transport was parked on the face of a rise until the position was carried. It had been expected, in view of the amazing strength of their position, that the enemy would make that desperate stand which they had boasted they would make, and that the storming and taking of this natural fortress would prove one of the fiercest and bloodiest struggles of the war. Only the magnificent and resistless charge of the stormers, and their clear determination to carry the position at all costs, could have induced the defenders to withdraw after the stand that they had made.

"Picture to oneself," wrote the correspondent referred to, "a long, swelling ridge, culminating on the right in a koppie 200 yards long by less than 100 in width—a koppie of which the torrential rains of many summers had washed out into relief great irregular masses of rock, affording complete cover from rifle fire, and even, between the blocks of stone, practical immunity from shell fire,

unless a projectile happened to burst within a yard or two. To the left of the koppie the ridge rose still higher, and then fell away towards the other side of the railway. At the back of the koppie, and 200 yards eastwards, stood the farmhouse of Bergendal, and round the house, and up against the rear of the koppie itself, rose a line of trees. From our left centre, which became the line of attack, the tops of the trees just showed above the koppie, while the house itself was invisible to most of the stormers, and only clearly seen by the gunners on the flanks. Beyond the koppie and the farmhouse, 4000 to 5000 yards away, was another koppie, on which the enemy had one or two guns, and between the farm and the latter the ground afforded splendid cover for thousands of riflemen. On the other side of the second koppie, again, and to the left of it, was Dalmanutha Station."

The first koppie being the key of the position, the attack was made by General Buller with his guns well on the flanks, and the infantry between. Fortunately the guns could be dis-

posed in that manner effectively, and were able to direct an enfilading fire at the rocky ledge and its surroundings. The infantry, had it been otherwise, would doubtless have lost half their number, or have been destroyed altogether, for they had to advance up a glacis of nearly 2000 yards without the slightest cover, while the koppie was defended by at least 200 men of the Johannesburg police, with a pom-pom served by State Artillerymen. This number was as many as the koppie could hold, so that every defender could make certain of cover and sure aim at the assailants. The defenders, too, were tried and disciplined fighters, and altogether the task before the Rifle Brigade and the Inniskillings in support was one of the gravest nature and needing the highest courage for its accomplishment. But General Buller had said that it was to be done, and the stormers did it, to the admiration of all who were witnesses. Amongst these was the Commander-in-Chief himself, Lord Roberts, and what his opinion was he clearly indicated in his despatch to the War Office.

It was ten o'clock in the morning when the last stage of the attack was reached, and after two hours' fighting General Buller, now seeing that the koppie must be carried, whatever the cost might be, ordered Colonel Metcalfe to extend his men in front and take the position by assault, the Inniskillings supporting the advance.

The Rifles deployed, company after company, like a machine, continues the correspondent. They found themselves at once under a hot fire from the koppie, while the Inniskillings, coming out into the open more on the right, received the attention of the Boers there. It was the Rifles, however, who became the special targets of the Police. The zone of flying lead threatened to sweep away every living thing that rose up to it. On the left, high up, the ground was not quite so open, but it was flat after a certain point, and when the Rifles deployed on to this flat, in preparation for the final dash, they had to go at the double, and then throw themselves on to the veldt. The front was already one line of fire, and it was only possible to advance

by successive rushes, and then grip the ground, to make as little mark as possible. The Boers had not calculated that the assailants would ever dream of storming the koppie, otherwise they would have burned off the veldt. It was fortunate for the Rifles that they had not done so, for khaki shows up vividly against the blackened earth, while grass withered by frost and the dry season closely resembles in colour that of the fighting garb of the British troops. Had it not been for this natural protection the loss of the Rifles in that grand assault would have been most severe.

The crisis was reached when the leading line had forced its way to within 400 yards of the koppie. Then the way was over perfectly flat ground. At the other end of the 400 yards the hill rose more threatening than ever. Now a terrific fight began as the stormers braced themselves for the last rush. That final dash was preceded by the crash of the guns, whose fire was concentrated on the koppie. Shrapnel was screaming and bursting everywhere, while dense columns of sickly-looking smoke, accompanied

by a deafening roar, marked the explosion of a Lyddite shell. Amid all this turmoil came the last charge of the Rifles. In this the colonel, moving about with perfect steadiness, was shot through the right arm while leading his men. A second bullet struck the buckle of his sword-belt, and glanced round his body, searing it as if a hot iron had been drawn over him.

“But the word had been given, and on went the men. At the moment the rush began the Artillery nerved themselves for a grand effort. Shells rained on the koppie, and a salvo from the howitzers dropped, with sickening precision, six Lyddite charges in a line amongst the rocks. It was more than flesh and blood could stand, and the Boers broke. Not all of them went then, however. Sixty or seventy remained some minutes after the Rifles’ final charge began, their bullets finding billets in many a brave fellow. But those relentless lines of stormers were too much for the nerves of the bulk of the defenders. They knew from past experience that a thousand Mausers could not stop that final charge; their hearts failed them—they

bolted, and left their pom-pom and the sixty to see it out. Fortunately for the whole of the sixty, only a few, either because they were possessed of a fine courage or had delayed their flight too long, remained to the last—but not on the koppie. They, too, when the stormers, leaving dead and wounded dotting the veldt, appeared over the crest, realised that the bayonet was already at their breasts, and bolted through the rocks to the back of the koppie, where they took shelter in a cattle kraal immediately in the rear. There they were found with their pom-pom.

“The Rifles had done magnificently. Bounding up the koppie, bayonet at the ‘ready,’ they found they were too late, and that the set-off to this incomparable charge and a loss of over 100 killed and wounded was a dozen dead Boers and as many prisoners. I rode over the field to the koppie as the firing ceased, and saw the dead and wounded as they had been stricken down; and neither the wounded nor the lucky ones showed the slightest appearance of the

ordeal they had just passed through. But the sight of the field, and the dead bodies of the enemy on the koppie, among them some shredded remains of what had been a man, until a Lyddite shell had burst close to him, were eloquent of what war meant. As the Boers retreated along the road at Dalmanutha, the guns accelerated their movements, and the 4.7 gun, at a range of 8300 yards, shelled the station as a train, the last Boer train, was leaving the siding. It got away, however, and with it whatever Boer dead and wounded had been picked up by the enemy in time. It is stated that 30 Boer dead were found lying in a trench near to the line, and we know that 39 wounded passed through Machadodorp the same evening for Watervaal Onder. The enemy's losses, therefore, probably exceeded ours, though there is, of course, no absolute certainty of it."

The Rifle Brigade had a stroke of ill luck in one of the unfortunate little affairs which characterised the closing days of the war. In

spite of the overwhelming defeat which the British had inflicted upon the Boers, there were at large numerous small bands of the enemy who were enabled, by reason of the extraordinary natural advantages of their country, to elude capture and to maintain guerilla warfare. It was one of these prowling bands which caused the mischief.

On October 9 an accident happened at Kaapmuiden, owing to a train being upset on the diversion over the Kaap River. In this catastrophe the 66th Battery, Royal Field Artillery, suffered severely, 3 men being killed, 15 injured, a subaltern having his leg broken, and about 40 animals being killed or badly injured.

With the object of ascertaining the nature of the damage caused by the accident, an engine, with a truck conveying 2 Royal Engineer officers and Captain G. L. Paget, Rifle Brigade, and 18 men of the Vlakfontein garrison, proceeded along the line. The Boers were lying in wait, and opened fire on the party.

On hearing of the attack, Captain A. D. Stewart, Rifle Brigade, went with 40 men in support. The casualties were very heavy. Captain Stewart and a private of the Rifle Brigade were killed ; Captain Paget was so dangerously wounded that he died soon afterwards, several men were wounded, and 10 men of the regiment were taken prisoners. An officer of the Royal Engineers was also captured, another was severely wounded, and 5 men, attached to the Engineers, were wounded.

CHAPTER XI

THE LOSSES OF THE RIFLE BRIGADE

UP to the end of September 1900, when the war was virtually ended—Lord Roberts had reported on the 19th that “nothing was left of the Boer army but a few marauding bands”—the total recorded losses—officially supplied—of the Rifle Brigade in South Africa were as follows:—

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|-------|
| Killed in action, 68 | } | . | . | . | 87 |
| Died of wounds, 19 | | | | | |
| Died of disease | . | . | . | . | 110 |
| | | | | | <hr/> |
| Total deaths | . | . | . | . | 197 |
| Wounded, not included in above | . | . | . | . | 336 |
| Missing | . | . | . | . | 10 |
| | | | | | <hr/> |
| | | | | | 543 |
| | | | | | <hr/> |

In officers killed and wounded there was the appended heavy list:—

LOSSES OF THE BRIGADE 189

KILLED, OR DIED OF WOUNDS OR DISEASE.

Lieut.-Colonel Sherston, D.S.O. (Staff), Glencoe.

Captain H. G. Majendie (second in command, Roberts's Horse), Riet River.

Captain Sydney Mills, Ladysmith.

Captain W. H. W. Steward

Captain G. L. Lysley . } Bergendal.

Captain E. G. Campbell . }

Captain A. D. Stewart

Captain G. L. Paget . } Kaapmuiden.

Lieutenant G. C. D. Fergusson, Surprise Hill.

Lieutenant L. D. Hall, Ladysmith.

Lieutenant R. W. Pearson, Ladysmith (enteric).

Second-Lieutenant B. E. Lethbridge.

Total number of officers killed, etc., 12.

WOUNDED.

Alexander, Captain R.

Baker-Carr, Second-Lieutenant C. D'A. B. S.

Basset, Second-Lieutenant W. F.

Bentinck, Captain W. G.

Biddulph, Captain H. M.

Blewitt, Lieutenant C. O. B.

Bond, Second-Lieutenant A. A. G.

Buxton, Second-Lieutenant J. L.

Congreve, Captain W. N., V.C.

Cuninghame, Sir T. A. A. M., Bart.

Davenport, Second-Lieutenant S.

Dumaresq, Second-Lieutenant H. W.

Ellis, Lieutenant G. M. A.
Graham, Second-Lieutenant R. G.
Harrison, Second-Lieutenant C. E.
Heriot-Maitland, Captain J. D.
Long, Captain and Adjutant S. C.
Maclachlan, Lieutenant R. C.
Metcalf, Lieut.-Colonel C. T. E.
Paley, Captain G.
Stephens, Captain R. B.
Stone, Captain and Quartermaster F.
Talbot, Captain F. G.
Tharp, Captain G. P.
Thesiger, Bt.-Major G. H.
Turner, Lieutenant B. A.
Verner, Lieut.-Colonel W.
Wingfield Digby, Lieutenant W. R.
Total number of officers wounded, 28.

Not a few past and present officers of the Rifle Brigade were intimately associated with Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, V.C., Commander-in-Chief, and General Sir Redvers Buller, V.C., General Officer commanding in Natal. In a war out of which many bitter criticisms have arisen, it is something indeed for the regiment to be able to say of one of its old officers—Lieut.-General Lyttelton—that he has been described



From a photograph by Gregory, Strana.

LIEUT.-GENERAL THE HON. N. G. LYTTELTON.

as the *one* general who has received nothing but praise. Next in order of seniority came Major-General Howard, Lieut.-Colonel Willoughby Verner, Lieut.-Colonel John Sherston, D.S.O. (killed at Glencoe when on the staff of Major-General Sir William Penn Symons, who was mortally wounded at the same engagement), and Lieut.-Colonel à Court, D.A.A.G. to General Buller.

Colonels Sherston and Willoughby Verner were amongst the first officers to come to grief in the war. Colonel Sherston was fresh from his duties as A.A.G. on the District Staff of the Bengal Command ; Colonel Verner went out to the Cape with General Buller ostensibly as D.A.A.G. for Topography, but on landing he was instantly sent to the front as Chief Staff Officer to the Frontier Force at Orange River. He was busily engaged there for a month, and on Lord Methuen advancing he accompanied that General to the Modder, as Reconnoitring Staff Officer. Colonel Verner took part in the battles of Belmont and Graspan. In the subsequent advance to the Modder the colonel's

horse rolled upon him—a not uncommon occurrence when galloping across the veldt—smashing his shoulder and ribs, and injuring his spine. Colonel Verner was sent down to Wynberg Hospital in December. He was too hopelessly crippled to take any further share in the campaign, and was eventually invalided home.

Colonel à Court was at Spion Kop with General Woodgate when that officer was mortally wounded. At one point of the fight five Boers were hiding behind a wall, trying to use their rifles. The colonel, as the Boers were driven forth, attempted to fire his Mauser pistol, but the safety catch was set. Seizing a big stone, however, he struck one of the enemy on the head, and brought him down. Throughout that trying and disastrous engagement Colonel à Court was here, there, and everywhere.

Early in the year 1900 General Lyttelton succeeded to the command of the Second Division, during the illness of General Clery ; and Colonel Norcott, of the 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade, temporarily succeeded Lyttelton. This was a very interesting change—a case of a

Rifleman following a Rifleman, for General Lyttelton had served long in the regiment and had commanded the 2nd Battalion; while in Colonel Norcott was a Rifleman representing the third generation of Norcotts to serve in the Rifle Brigade.

The undermentioned officers of the Rifle Brigade appeared in the *Army List* for June 1900, as holding positions on the staff of the forces in South Africa. The *Army List* for that month seemed appropriate, as by that time the commands had settled to their work, and represented those bodies which had so successfully conducted the campaign.

| | | |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Headquarters Staff | { | Lieut.-Col. W. W. C. Verner, D.A.A.G. for Topography. Lieut.-Col. C. à Court, D.A.A.G. |
|--------------------|---|--|

4TH DIVISION (Natal)

Lieut.-Gen. Hon. N. G. Lyttelton, C.B.

Capt. Hon. H. Yarde-Buller, A.D.C.

8th Brigade

Major-Gen. F. Howard, C.B., C.M.G., A.D.C.

Capt. H. E. Vernon, D.S.O., A.D.C.

Staff—INFANTRY DIVISIONS AND BRIGADES

Bt. Lieut.-Col. Hon. C. G. Fortescue, C.M.G., Brigade-Major (Natal).

Capt. H. H. Wilson, Brigade-Major (Natal).

Capt. W. N. Congreve, V.C. (Press Censor).

Divisional Signalling Officer (graded as Staff Captain)

—Lieut. J. T. Burnett-Stuart.

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Special Service Officers | { | Capt. A. G. Ferguson. |
| | | Capt. E. A. F. Dawson. |
| | | Lieut. P. G. A. Cox. |
| | | Lieut. B. G. R. Oldfield. |

Rhodesian Field Force

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Special Service Officers | { | Major A. V. Jenner, D.S.O. |
| | | Lieut. C. H. Dillon. |
| | | Lieut. A. A. Dorrien-Smith. |

In addition to the foregoing, the following officers of the Rifle Brigade, who had retired from the service, rejoined for the war, and were employed in various positions in South Africa :—

Lieut.-Col. J. Mansel.

Major C. R. Prideaux-Brune.

Capt. H. C. Cholmondeley.

Capt. Sir Charles Hunter, Bart.

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Capt. Sir R. N. Rycroft, Bart.

Capt. Lord Bingham.

Capt. Maxwell Sherston.

Capt. R. Ford.

Lieut. M. U. Weyland.

In previous chapters particulars have been given of the conditions under which the wounded were treated early in the century. Compare with these the treatment of to-day. Sir William MacCormac, the celebrated surgeon who volunteered for service in South Africa, furnished to the *Lancet* a graphic description of the medical work which followed General Buller's reverse at the Tugela River—an action in which the Rifle Brigade took part, and in which, happily, it escaped serious loss. “The heat,” said Sir William, “has been intense. We have had three very busy hard-working days, and returned weary and sad for such grievous loss and suffering. We arrived at Chieveley Station about 1.30 P.M. The cannonading had ceased about one o'clock. We found the station occupied by a hospital train. The train carried the first results of the battle, and it was a very distressing

sight. The wounded filled the carriages just as they had come from the field ; every wound had been dressed extremely well under fire."

Sir William received permission to walk to the field hospitals of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Brigades, about 400 yards outside the fire zone. "Each of the three operating tents contained two operating tables, and as fast as a patient was taken off the table another took his place. Awaiting their turn the wounded were lying outside in rows, which were being continually augmented by the civilian bearers coming in from the field. As each wounded man reached the hospital he was served with a hot cup of bovril, large cans of which were boiling outside the tents.

"The way in which the wounded had been dressed upon the field, and each man ticketed with the nature of his wound, his name and regiment, was excellent, and was very useful for identification. This also saved much time at the field hospitals, because the seriously wounded could be at once discriminated from the more trivial cases. The latter went away at once to

the tents, and the former were re-dressed and operated upon when necessary by the four officers of each of the field hospitals and the three surgeons of each of the three bearer companies.

“The spectacle at the field hospitals was most painful. Ambulance waggon after ambulance waggon, and stretcher squad after stretcher squad, came in while I was there, pouring in the wounded, some of whom had died on the way, and could unfortunately only be carried to the mortuary tents. The work performed in the operating tents was of great efficiency, the operations being deliberately carried out with skill and despatch under the very trying circumstances of intense heat, hurry, and excitement all round.

“The R.A.M.C. officers of these hospitals had started their surgical work about 3 A.M., and when I visited them in the evening they were still hard at it, having had no food meanwhile and no time for rest ; and the work went on for hours afterwards.

“Altogether some 800 patients passed through the field hospitals during the day. The men

showed the utmost pluck and endurance ; there was not the smallest despondency, the predominant feeling being anxiety to return and fight again. This was very splendid of them, after such a day as they had experienced, and makes one feel very proud of their fine mettle.

“The hospital trains rapidly took them away. Each train carries on an average 100 cases, and is equipped with every possible requirement, besides iced soda, champagne, soup, and other comforts in abundance, so I am certain that all that human foresight could accomplish was done during the journeys for the mitigation of the sufferings of the wounded.

“The first train, which was for a time under fire, left the immediate vicinity of the battlefield at 2 P.M. with 119 wounded ; a second train was despatched at 8 A.M. on the 16th ; a third train at 2 P.M. on the 16th ; a fourth at daylight on the 17th ; and a fifth at 8 A.M. on the 17th—a very quick succession. All the field hospitals were empty at daybreak on the 17th, and this was done notwithstanding that they were obliged to move the hospitals in the

midst of their work to escape from the zone of fire.

“The battle finished at 2 P.M., and by 6 P.M. 800 wounded had been cleared from the battlefield. By midnight on the following day the last wounded man had left the hospitals at the front for Estcourt, Pietermaritzburg, Durban, and the hospital ships.”

The South African war, like all the wars in which the Rifle Brigade has had a share, was productive of many interesting incidents. Nothing was more striking than the recoveries from what would have seemed to be inevitably fatal rifle shots. Men who suffered from severe bullet wounds recovered in an amazingly short space of time and rejoined the fighting line. The singular case of Private H. Cuthbert, of the 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade, is deserving of record. At the storming of Vaal Krantz on February 5, 1900, Cuthbert was struck in the face by a Mauser bullet. Although the Röntgen rays were used, all efforts to locate the bullet failed, and the patient, discharged as cured, accompanied his battalion

through its trying operations in Northern Natal. Although a slight peculiarity was observed in Cuthbert's speech, he had but little inconvenience from his wound. This continued for six months; then in a violent attack of sneezing Cuthbert dislodged what proved to be the missing bullet, which had become firmly embedded, point downward, in his jaw. Such is the story which was published at the time, and remembering that men who had been shot through the lungs and the brain recovered, and rejoined their regiments, there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the story told of Private Cuthbert.

In the hundred years of its existence the Rifle Brigade has suffered a loss in life which makes an appalling total. Nearly 300 of its officers have been killed and wounded, and not far short of 5000 of other ranks. That is altogether irrespective of its losses through disease and other causes. The Walcheren Expedition, the Crimea, and the Mutiny—saying nothing of the Peninsula—claimed more than 1000 lives from the regiment, and other

campaigns have made heavy drains on its vitality. I had estimated, from the returns available, that the entire loss by death during the century was not far short of 10,000 of all ranks. Colonel Verner,¹ however, has made an actuarial calculation by which he arrives at a smaller total. The least he can possibly make it is 1100 of all ranks killed, and 6000 to 7000 died of wounds and disease. The losses from wounds and disease, 1800-15, are usually accepted as eight times greater than those slain outright—5450.

It is certain that these calculations as to the losses of the regiment are under, and not over, the mark.

Could anything tell more strongly than these silent figures what the Rifle Brigade has done for Britain?

¹ "A Century of Fighting," *Macmillan's Magazine*, October 1900.

APPENDIX

I. GENERAL CHRONOLOGY OF THE RIFLE BRIGADE

1800. The Rifle Brigade, then known as the Rifle Corps, raised. Armed with the Baker rifle. On August 25 the newly-created riflemen received their baptism of fire at Ferrol, North-West Spain. Since then this date has annually been observed as the regimental birthday of the Rifle Brigade.

These were the *first* British Riflemen to meet an enemy of Great Britain.

1801. Battle of Copenhagen. Riflemen engaged in Nelson's fleet. Lieutenant Grant the first officer of the regiment to be killed in action.

1803. The Rifle Corps incorporated amongst the Line Regiments, and numbered the 95th Foot. Colloquially known as The Rifles.

1805. 1st Battalion shared in the abortive expedition to Germany.

1807. 2nd Battalion at Monte Video. Both battalions engaged in disastrous attempt on Buenos Ayres.

Capture of Copenhagen and destruction of Danish fleet.

1808. 1st Battalion sailed for Sweden on useless expedition ; thence to Portugal to join Wellington's army.

2nd Battalion met the French at Obidos, the first affair of the Peninsular War. For six years the 95th was constantly engaged in fighting, storming and sieging, taking a leading part in all the battles of the Peninsula save one—Albuhera.

1809. 2nd Battalion suffered heavily from disease in the disastrous Walcheren Expedition.

1810. Valiant defence of the bridge of Barba del Puerco by the 95th. High praise of the Riflemen by Wellington.

1813. Battles in the Pyrenees.

1814. Fight at Tarbes, March 20. In this affair not a shot was fired except by the 95th ; hence Tarbes is regarded as *the* regimental fight of the Rifle Brigade to this day.

1st, 2nd, and 3rd Battalions represented in expedition to Flanders.

1815. 95th shared in the disastrous assault on the lines of New Orleans, January. At Quatre Bras the 95th were the first British soldiers to contest Ney's advance. They drove the French marshal's troops from the wood of Piermont. On the day following the 95th were the only infantry with Wellington's rear-guard in the retirement on Waterloo.

June 18, heavy losses at Waterloo. All three battalions engaged. 95th marched, after the great battle, on Paris, and were joined in that city by the five companies of the 3rd Battalion, fresh from New Orleans.

1816. In February the 95th were removed from the Line and became the Rifle Brigade.

1818. On the general reduction of the army the 3rd Battalion was disbanded. Since its establishment, for eighteen years, the regiment had been almost ceaselessly on active service, having fought in France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal, and North and South America. Many years of peace were now enjoyed.

1838. The Baker rifle superseded by the Brunswick rifle.

1846. 1st Battalion ordered to South Africa, where it helped to put down a Kaffir revolt in Cape Colony.

1848. Regiment shared in a successful expedition under Sir Harry Smith, an old Rifle officer, against the Boers.

1850. 1st Battalion returned to England.

1851. Went back to South Africa to assist in suppression of second Kaffir outbreak.

1853. The Minié rifle issued to the regiment.

1854. Both battalions despatched to the Crimea.

1855. A third Battalion raised for a second time.

1857. 4th Battalion added. The Rifle Brigade has

since consisted of four battalions. 2nd and 3rd Battalions sent to India to help to put down the Mutiny.

1864. 3rd Battalion in the Mohmund Expedition on the North-West Frontier of India.

1867. The Enfield muzzle-loader, which had superseded the Minié during the Crimean War, replaced by the Snider-Enfield breech-loader.

1873-74. 2nd Battalion shared in expedition to Ashantee, under Sir Garnet Wolseley, subsequently Viscount Wolseley, Commander-in-Chief.

1874. The Martini-Henry breech-loader issued to the Rifle Brigade.

1877. 4th Battalion saw active service for the first time, in expedition against the Jowakis, on the North-West Frontier.

1878. 4th Battalion took part in the Afghan War, and was present at the capture of Ali Masjid.

1880. 4th Battalion employed in an expedition against the Waziris, North-West Frontier.

1884-85. Regiment represented in the Rifle Company of the Camel Corps of the Nile Expeditionary Force; marched across the desert under Stewart; were present at Abu Klea, El Gubat, and in later fights in the effort to save Gordon.

1885-87. 1st Battalion shared in the conquest of Burmah.

1888-89. 4th Battalion served in Burmah, and was represented in the Karen Expedition a year later.

1890. The Lee-Metford magazine rifle issued to the Rifle Brigade.

1895-96. 2nd Battalion represented in the second expedition to Ashantee, which broke King Prempeh's power.

1896-97. Rifle Brigade represented in suppressing the Mashonaland Rebellion.

1897. 3rd Battalion shared in expedition to the Tochi Valley, suffering heavy loss by disease.

1898. 2nd Battalion shared in the Khartoum Expedition.

1899 and 1900. 1st and 2nd Battalions went to South Africa. The campaign was made notable in the annals of the regiment by a sortie from Ladysmith by the 2nd Battalion on December 10, 1899, to destroy a heavy gun which had caused great mischief to the besieged garrison; and by the storming of a Boer natural fortress at Bergendal on August 27, 1900, by the same battalion. These affairs, like Tarbes, in 1814, were peculiarly regimental.

Stained-glass window erected in the cathedral at Winchester, the depot of the Rifle Brigade, with the regimental badge in the apex, and a brass tablet below recording sixty actions and campaigns in which, during the century of its existence, the Rifle Brigade has taken part.

1900. The Rifle Brigade, on August 25, celebrated its centenary.

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3. BRITISH LOSSES IN THE PENINSULA AND AT WATERLOO

The following is a general estimate of the losses sustained by the British Army, under the command of Lord Wellington, from the time of his appointment to it in Portugal until the Peace.

There fell in the campaign of

| | | | | | |
|------|---|---|---|-------------|-----------|
| 1808 | . | . | . | 69 officers | 1,015 men |
| 1809 | . | . | . | 243 „ | 4,688 „ |
| 1810 | . | . | . | 78 „ | 924 „ |
| 1811 | . | . | . | 459 „ | 7,384 „ |
| 1812 | . | . | . | 816 „ | 11,030 „ |
| 1813 | . | . | . | 1025 „ | 14,966 „ |
| 1814 | . | . | . | 400 „ | 4,791 „ |
| 1815 | . | . | . | 717 „ | 9,485 „ |

Total . . . 3807 officers 54,283 men
killed or wounded.

This total does not include the Brunswickers, Hanoverians, Portuguese, nor Spaniards.

The proportion of the killed to the combatants was—

At Salamanca, 1 to 90.

Vittoria, 1 to 74.

Waterloo, 1 to 40 ; while at the battle of the Nile,
the ratio was 1 to 36.

Trafalgar, 1 to 41.

Copenhagen, 1 to 39.

The loss sustained—

At Talavera, was 30 officers, including 2 generals,

and 767 killed ; 195 officers, of whom 3 were generals, and 3718 non-commissioned officers and privates wounded.

Fuentes d'Onor, 14 officers, 175 non-commissioned officers and privates killed ; 78, of whom 3 general officers, and 1103 men wounded.

Albuhera, 32 officers, including 1 general, 850 men killed ; 165 officers, of whom 7 generals, and 2467 men wounded.

Salamanca, 18 officers, of whom 1 general, 360 men killed ; 178 officers, of whom 4 generals, 1536 men wounded.

Vittoria, 26 officers, 479 men killed ; 166 officers, 2640 men wounded.

Toulouse, 16 officers, 296 men killed ; 134 officers, of whom 2 generals, 1661 men wounded.

Waterloo, 108 officers, of whom 2 generals, 1651 men killed ; 436 officers, of whom 10 generals, 6456 men wounded.

4. NELSON AND THE RIFLE CORPS

“On board the British fleet at Copenhagen was a detachment of troops, consisting of the 49th Regiment, about 700 rank and file, commanded by Lieut.-Colonel Brooke, and a company of the Rifle Corps (now the 95th Regiment), 100 rank and file, commanded by Captain Sidney Beckwith. The whole was under the Hon. Colonel Stewart, brother to the present Earl or Galloway.”—Clarke and M'Arthur's *Life of Nelson*.

Letter in which Nelson expressed the hope that the Rifle Corps would be increased, addressed to Colonel Stewart, and dated *Amazon*, Downs, October 10, 1801:—

“I dislike all these childish rejoicings for peace. It is a good thing, I hope ; but I would burst before I would let a damned rascal of a Frenchman know that either peace or war affected me with either joy or sorrow. I hope the Government will encrease your Rifle Corps. Although it is peace, we must always be on our guard against Corsican treachery ingrafted upon French infamy. Damn them all is the constant prayer of—My dear Stewart, your most obliged and affectionate friend,

NELSON AND BRONTË.”

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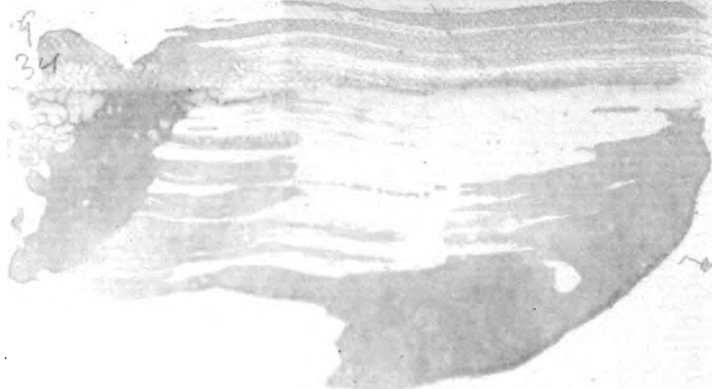
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